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A HISTORY OF THE CAPE FEAR CONFERENCE  
OF ORIGINAL FREE WILL BAPTISTS  
1855 - 2010

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A history of the Cape Fear Conference.



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of Original Free Will Baptists  
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**Commissioned by the Executive Committee of the Cape Fear Conference**

**Compiled and Written By  
The Cape Fear Conference History Committee**

Mr. Gary F. Barefoot  
Curator of the Free Will Baptist Historical Collection

Dr. Alan K. Lamm  
History Professor at Mount Olive College

Dr. Michael R. Pelt  
Religion Professor Emeritus of Mount Olive College

Rev. Ricky J. Warren  
Committee Chairman

This is one of two copies produced and bound by the Committee for the Cape Fear Conference, as directed by the Executive Committee of the Conference. Copy 1 was presented to the Cape Fear Conference and copy 2 was presented to the Free Will Baptist Historical Collection. Plans are being made to make other copies available from the FWB Press.

--Gary Barefoot, Nov. 8, 2011





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**Presented to the 157th Annual Session of the Cape Fear Conference**

**November 8, 2011**



Dedicated to the memory of

**Dr. William Burkette Raper**

September 10, 1927 – August 1, 2011

This project was written as a result of his vision, communicated by him at the 2009 Session of the Cape Fear Conference, for such a history to be compiled.



## Preface

As a result of the action by the Cape Fear Conference that a historical committee be charged with the task of revising the previous account of the history of the Conference and bringing it up to date, the committee began its work. Fortunately, the Committee had access to the records of the Conference from its founding in 1855 until the present. These records have been deposited over the years in the Free Will Baptist Historical Collection at Mount Olive College, which is a valuable resource for many types of historical research.

Preparing a narrative of conference actions, based on the minutes of the annual sessions and other available sources, was assigned to Rev. Ricky Warren and Dr. Michael Pelt. This task involved a selection of items in the minutes that appeared to have historical significance since it would be impossible to give attention to the vast amount of recorded information, much of which was repeated in slightly different forms from year to year. We were faced with the same problem confronting any historian who must choose what is considered to have special meaning and value for the current generation of readers without completely ignoring those ideas and events that are peculiar to earlier times and circumstances.

It is inevitable that some past events and circumstances would receive more attention because of the impact which they had on the conference and the churches at a given time or which may continue to shape the actions of later times right up to the present. Such examples as the division of the Cape Fear Conference in 1911-12 on the issues presented by the Holiness and Pentecostal movements and the issues which led to the separation of the North Carolina Convention from the National Association of Free Will Baptists in 1962 have had a lasting influence on the Cape Fear Conference and its churches. In the treatment of the early history of the Conference and such events as those just mentioned we have made use of some material in *A History of Original Free Will Baptists* by Dr. Michael Pelt with permission of the author.

The committee felt that any history of the Conference should include brief histories of the current churches belonging to the body. Dr. Alan Lamm and Gary Barefoot were charged with the task of preparing these histories. Letters were written to all churches for which written histories were not available in the Free Will Baptist Historical Collection at Mount Olive College, requesting that the churches provide any written histories they had available or provide



historical information if no formal recorded history was available. Some churches did respond while several did not. If historical material was available, either in the Historical Collection or from the church itself, this material was used to prepare brief histories of each church. For those churches that had no written material available and which did not respond to the request for such, only basic information obtained from the Cape Fear minutes or other sources was used to prepare the very brief entries for those churches. These are so noted in the narrative with \*\* indicating the lack of information available.

It is the hope of the committee that the work done on this document will enable the reader to have a better grasp of important developments in the history of the Cape Fear Conference and its local churches. If so, then our labors on this project will have been well spent.

Members of the historical committee include: Rev. Ricky Warren, chair; Dr. Michael Pelt; Mr. Gary Barefoot; and Dr. Alan Lamm.





**Section 1**  
**A Summary of the Conference Minutes**  
**1855-2010**



## **A History of the Cape Fear Conference**

This Free Will Baptist Conference was organized in 1855 at Stoney Run Church, Cumberland County (now Sampson County), NC. Delegates from eight churches and seven ministers convened on November 1-4 and proceeded to organize a new conference. The original churches were Stoney Run, Long Branch, Free Union, Fayetteville, Shady Grove, Bethsaida, Prospect, and Elbethel. The combined membership of these eight churches was 370. Stoney Run and Long Branch had been members of the General Conference of Original Free Will Baptists as early as 1845. Four of the seven ministers enrolled at this first annual meeting had been members of the General Conference. One of these, Elder John Williams, was chosen as moderator. Elder James Turnage was elected as clerk of the Conference and Thomas Avera was chosen as general treasurer.

The fact that in 1853 the General Conference had divided into two factions brought on by a controversy over whether or not members of a Free Will Baptist Church should join a secret society like the Masons may have entered into the decision to form a new conference, which would include churches that had not yet affiliated with any conference. The tradition that some ministers who assumed leadership in this new conference had sought counsel from the South Carolina Conference on the proper procedure for organizing a conference has no historical record to support it.

Action was taken at the first session to have "one hundred copies of a discipline printed," each church to pay a portion of the cost. In the absence of any surviving copy, we may assume that the articles of faith were the same as those used by the General Conference. The Cape Fear Conference prepared its own constitution and rules of order, which were later recorded in a book procured for the purpose of recording the business of each annual meeting and other pertinent information. For example, it was recorded in the meeting of this Conference in 1875, that Elder James Turnage was requested to furnish "an account of the origin and early history of the Cape Fear Free Will Baptist Conference, and that the recording secretary be instructed to enter the same upon the conference book of records, provided they be not found already recorded on said book." In 1859, it was recorded that the Conference sent out Elder William Byrd, of Harnett County, as an itinerant minister to preach in and out of the bounds of the Conference for one year. He received a salary of \$200 for his services that year and a committee of five



persons was appointed to have oversight of this ministry. For reasons that are not given, the minutes of the annual meetings from 1860 to 1865 are not recorded in this book of records. Since the nation was engaged in the Civil War during this period, this may help to explain the missing records, or more likely they were lost before they could be recorded for posterity. The likelihood that the Cape Fear Conference met annually during this difficult time may be seen from the fact that other records show that delegates were chosen by the General Conference to visit the Cape Fear Conference. Likewise, delegates from the Cape Fear Conference were seated at some annual sessions of the General Conference.

During the early decades of its history the Cape Fear Conference enjoyed a harmonious relationship with other Free Will Baptist conferences. At most annual sessions, visiting delegates from the South Carolina Conference or the North Carolina General Conference were seated and the Cape Fear Conference usually reciprocated by appointing a delegate or delegation to these sister conferences. Additionally, action was taken in 1857 “to keep up a correspondence with the South Carolina Conference” by appointing Elders James Turnage and William Byrd to serve as a committee charged with this responsibility.

At the annual meeting of the Cape Fear Conference in 1858 Elders James W. Hunnicut and Bushrod W. Nash, of the Union Baptists of Virginia, and Brother Owen James, of Union Baptists of North Carolina, were seated as visiting delegates. These men were active in planting churches and leading other established churches to join them in a movement to unite all Open-Communion Baptists into one body. In 1858, the Cape Fear Conference agreed to send Elders John Williams, Stephen D. Collins, and William Byrd as delegates to the Grand Council of Union Baptists of North Carolina. The following year, Bushrod W. Nash was again seated as a visiting delegate at the Cape Fear Conference and by resolution of the Conference was granted permission to “preach in the bounds of the Cape Fear Conference for the present.” Nash was also present at the 1874 session when he received permission to address the Conference. He spoke for several minutes “urging the necessity of union between all liberal Baptists.” (The term liberal was used to designate those Baptists who emphasized the concept of freedom implied in the terms “free will” and “free salvation.”) In 1875 and 1876, Elder Nash was again a



visiting delegate but there is no reference to his having spoken at these sessions. Finally, in 1884, he was enrolled as a visiting minister from the Union Association. Such visits by representatives of neighboring church groups were also taking place in the General Conference of Free Will Baptists in North Carolina.

Other denominations which were occasionally represented by visitors to The Cape Fear Conference were: the Disciples of Christ, the Methodist Episcopal Church South, the Mt. Zion Baptist Association, and the Virginia and North Carolina Conference of the Christian Church.

### **After the Civil War**

In 1866, the Cape Fear Conference, meeting at Bethsaida Church in Harnett County, approved resolutions affecting “the colored members of our connection being allowed to preach the gospel....” The full text of these resolutions is as follows:

Whereas the political condition of the colored members of our connection has been changed, they having been slaves, and deprived of the privilege of preaching the gospel but now declared free by the authority of the United States, and are no longer to be deprived of such a privilege; and whereas some of them have applied to this conference for legal church authority; therefore be it resolved: First, that if any colored member of our connection shall feel divinely called to take upon himself the public ministry, they shall have the liberty to apply to the church of which he is a member; and if the church, on examination, should find him worthy, may grant him license to exhort among his own color. Second, that if the licentiate shall prove worthy, sound in faith and doctrine, and shall promise usefulness in the cause, then the pastor may, by the request of the church, proceed to a second examination; and if the candidate is found orthodox, may set him apart to preach the gospel, administer its ordinances, receive members, raise up churches of their own color, to be held under the jurisdiction of this conference, and governed by the same discipline. Third, that the conference appoint a committee of three ministers to visit said churches, whose duty it shall be to ascertain the statistics of said churches and report annually. Fourth, that such churches shall be represented in the conference by the committee having the oversight of them, and enrolled on our minutes as the African Free Will Baptist Church.

These resolutions would have the effect of creating separate churches for colored persons who would quite naturally be drawn out of the churches of their former masters to form churches of their own. The fact that these churches were to be designated as the





African Free Will Baptist Church would eventually lead to an entire separation of these churches from the Cape Fear Conference.

During the year 1870, the Conference sent two missionaries, Elders B. B. Holder and J. W. Lucas, to southeast Alabama to minister to two churches, Bethsaida and Judson, which had previously been organized by Elder Holder. Both of these mission churches were represented at the 1870 conference by Elder Holder and their reports were given at that session. For the promotion of mission work, a mission board was appointed in 1872. Its specific purpose was to support the itinerant preachers who were sent out to help destitute churches that had fallen on hard times during the years after the Civil War. These itinerant preachers also encouraged the organization of Sabbath schools in the churches. At this time the Sunday school movement was in its infancy. At the conference in 1870, a committee had been appointed to supervise the organization of Sabbath schools throughout the Conference and in 1872, it reported that large schools were in operation at several of the churches and that interest in this work was increasing. However, during the following three years, there was a declining interest in Sabbath schools, so the committee requested that the moderator appoint a Sabbath school board of twelve members for the purpose of devising a plan for the successful promotion of this work.

As early as 1874, there was an active prayer meeting committee, which recommended that prayer meetings be held regularly in all churches and in private homes. It also recommended that an altar for prayer be established in every home throughout the Conference, if possible. At the Conference in 1875 more emphasis was placed on the importance of prayer meetings. Subsequently all the pastors in the Conference were appointed as a committee to promote interest in prayer meetings. This approach was continued for the next four years, but then it was deemed expedient to place responsibility for prayer meetings in the hands of laymen of each individual church. Thus, each church was asked to appoint a committee of three of its members as a committee on prayer meetings. The duty of this committee was to hold prayer meetings as often as practicable and to invite all the members of the church to participate.

As early as 1874, the Cape Fear Conference had a committee on temperance. At the annual session of the Conference that year, Elder J. W. Lucas gave the report of the



Temperance Committee. In his report, he spoke on the necessity of total abstinence among members of the church. He was followed by Elder James Turnage, who spoke on the same subject. In contrast to the General Conference, which appears to have allowed a moderate approach to the use of intoxicating beverages, there is some evidence that the Cape Fear Conference was being influenced by the Northern Freewill Baptists at this time, whose views on total abstinence were widely circulated through their denominational publications.

During the first twenty years of its history, the Cape Fear Conference endured many hardships and faced many obstacles to progress. Chief among these was a lack of educated ministers and a deficiency of funds with which to carry on their work. In 1876, the great need of educated ministers was recognized when a committee was appointed to suggest some plan for the better education of needy young men entering the ministry in this Conference. The committee, which submitted its plan the following day, suggested that the Conference elect a committee of five on ministerial education to devise a plan for raising funds in order to assist needy young men in their preparation for the ministry. This committee was appointed and was soon organized to proceed with their work. Two years later, their plans had enabled them to render financial aid to two young ministerial students, J. M. Beattie and B. Avery. For further enlightenment and assistance to the young ministers, a Ministers' Meeting was organized in 1884, which was to meet at least once a year for the benefit of the members. The desire of the Conference was that the younger ministers would receive counsel from the older and more experienced ministers. Every minister was required to attend the Ministers' Meetings. Anyone who failed to attend, unless he was providentially hindered, was considered to be not in good standing. The ministers continued to meet annually until 1903, when the resolution that had constituted the ministers' meeting was repealed. In order to ensure the churches of the Conference against ministers of questionable character, a committee of five laymen was appointed in 1884 to have oversight of the character of the ministers and to report at each session of the Conference.



## **Growth at the Close of the Nineteenth Century**

The second half of the nineteenth century was a period of growth in the Free Will Baptist Church. This was especially true of the churches in the General Conference, which had grown so large that it was increasingly difficult for churches so widely separated to be represented at the annual meetings. Therefore, action was taken in 1886 to form the Western Conference, consisting of churches located west of the Wilmington and Weldon Railroad. Then, in 1895, the eastern part of the General Conference, consisting of 120 churches, was again divided into the Central Conference and the Eastern Conference.

Meanwhile, the Cape Fear Conference had continued to show a steady increase in the number of churches and in total membership. In 1896, they could claim as many as twenty-nine churches and a total membership of 2,159 with twenty-two ministers. Year by year they maintained a fraternal relationship with the General Conference. After the division of that Conference in 1886 they appointed delegates to the Western and later to both the Eastern and Central Conferences and in turn seated delegates from these conferences in their annual meetings.

In 1890, the Cape Fear Conference met at Hopewell Church, Johnston County. There were four visiting brethren from the Western Conference, one of which was Elder P. T. Lucas, who presented *The Free Will Baptist* (then published at Snow Hill, North Carolina). He requested the patronage of this Conference for the paper, and the Conference endorsed *The Free Will Baptist* as “the organ of the denomination.”

The work of organizing and maintaining Sabbath schools continued to make limited progress during the latter years of the nineteenth century. The need for an organization to promote that work led to the organization of a Sabbath School Convention in 1892, to be held annually on the Saturday before the first Sunday in October. Each Sabbath school was entitled to one representative, whose duty it was to carry a report of his school to the Convention. Among other important actions taken at that session in 1892, was the endorsement of the Free Will Baptist literature to be used in the Sabbath schools. The only earlier reference to Sabbath school literature was the repeated instruction to use non-sectarian literature.



## **Plans for a Free Will Baptist School**

The first efforts toward establishing a denominational school were made at the 1894 session of the Conference. To raise funds for this endeavor, every male member was assessed ten cents. The plans were for the school to be used by the Eastern and Western Conferences in addition to the Cape Fear Conference. In 1895, the establishment of a Free Will Baptist school appeared to be a deferred hope. Therefore, a temporary effort was made to help fill the great necessity of an educated ministry. The ordaining presbytery of the Conference was asked to execute the plans by selecting from various theological published works, such as they might find to be in keeping with the doctrine of our church, and to recommend these works to the licensed ministers of the Conference. The ordaining presbytery was instructed to require each applicant for ordination to reach a specified point in his theological studies before considering him a fit subject for ordination.

Those early plans for establishing a Free Will Baptist school, which were first discussed in 1894, began to bear fruit in 1902. It was during that year that a committee on education purchased school property at Beulah, North Carolina, which was three miles southeast of Clinton. This property included thirteen acres of land and one good school house, furnished with stoves and one good piano. The property was valued at \$1000; however, the Conference was able to purchase it for only \$280. In August of that year, the school opened for a session of ten months under the leadership of Professor J. E. B. Davis, son of Rev. Daniel Davis of the Western Conference. The Cape Fear Conference guaranteed Professor Davis a salary of \$50 per month and furnished an assistant teacher for him. After operating the school for one year, Professor Davis reported a deficiency of \$278.22 for his salary and operating expenses, and this deficiency was then paid by the Conference. At the 1903 session of the Conference, the Committee on Education recommended Professor Davis, Principal of Beulah School, to be a competent educator, who was fully prepared to impart to his students the necessary instruction and training. The committee also recommended the school on the merits of its location, emphasizing its healthy climate and its convenience to the railroad. They explained that room and board could be obtained with good families in private homes at six to seven dollars per month, with every convenience to suit the students in a preparatory school.





By 1904, the Beulah School property had become debt-free and the deed had been made to the Conference. Brother W. A. Jackson, succeeding Professor Davis, began a five month term as Principal on November 7, 1904. Beulah High School opened in 1905 under the management of two new teachers, Professor A. R. Flowers of the Western Conference and Professor Julius Dudley (otherwise unknown). The school was doing fairly well at that time, although it was in need of more patronage. The trustees of the school reported at the Conference in 1906 that the school was receiving inadequate patronage from the church members as well as inadequate financial assistance from the Conference. Since the Conference was unable to provide the major portion of the school's support, it was decided to sell the school property, except the piano, to the Beulah School District in 1907 for a total of \$392.50. This covered the original cost of the property plus the cost of desks and other equipment. The fact that public high schools in the state had been given much more support since the beginning of the twentieth century helps to account for the lack of patronage of the Beulah School, which depended on the churches for its patronage and its financial support. Even though this venture on the part of the Conference had not succeeded, the committee on education still encouraged its prospective ministers to receive a thorough education before seeking ordination.

Meanwhile, the Ayden Seminary, which opened in 1898, was able to continue operating under the leadership of Professor Thomas E. Peden. Gradually, it was able to draw support and patronage from other Free Will Baptists in North Carolina and beyond.

### **Organization of the Union Conference**

Looking back to the year 1890 at the Western Conference, which met that year at Little Rock Church in Wilson County, Elder R. A. Johnson and Brother H. W. Jernigan were seated as delegates from the Cape Fear Conference. A committee was appointed to confer with these men in drawing up resolutions favoring the union of the two conferences or a working relationship between them. This committee prepared a list of resolutions which were then reported to the two conferences. These resolutions proposed that a general conference be held on the Tuesday before the second Sunday in February, 1891, at Pine Level Church in Johnston County. The officers and ministers of each



conference were to serve as the members of the body, and one delegate from each church was to belong to either of the two member conferences. This effort to bring about greater unity between the Western and the Cape Fear Conferences was the first step toward uniting Free Will Baptists in a single organization throughout North Carolina.

The Union Conference held its first meeting as scheduled at Pine Level. Annual meetings of the Union Conference were held in February each year thereafter until the organization of the North Carolina State Convention was proposed in 1912. During this period there was an effort to engage the churches of the Central and Eastern Conferences to be represented at the annual meetings of the Union Conference, but very few member churches from these conferences chose to participate in these annual meetings. Some of them were represented by letter or by the pastor. Attempts were made at the annual sessions to encourage support for such causes as prohibition of the production and sale of alcoholic beverages, the organization of Sabbath schools, support for the new Seminary located at Ayden (established in 1898), and the promotion of missions. The most likely reason for the lack of enthusiastic participation of the churches in the annual meetings of the Union Conference is that it duplicated much of what was being done in the regular meetings of the various conferences.

### **The Impact of the Holiness and Pentecostal Movements**

The Holiness movement in America arose in the nineteenth century, partly as a result of the revivals that swept across the land and the desire for perfection that accompanied these revivals. It was a prominent feature of the Methodist Church, which was influenced by John Wesley's teaching on Christian perfection and which was interpreted by many as a "second blessing." This interpretation of sanctification as a second work of grace had a disruptive effect in Methodist circles due to a reaction on the part of some to what was felt to be the growing "worldliness" of church members. Thus, new denominations were formed, such as the Nazarene Church and various Holiness churches. This emphasis on holiness as the mark of true Christianity was bound to have some influence on many Protestant churches in the latter part of the nineteenth century. As with the impact of other movements in American church history, Free Will Baptists were not immune to these influences. The result was a division in the Cape Fear



Conference and turmoil in the churches of that area as well as in parts of the Western, Central, and Eastern Conferences of the Free Will Baptist Church.

As early as the 1880's the Cape Fear Conference had decided to adopt a different form of the Articles of Faith from that which they had previously recognized. Instead of the former Articles of Faith which the Original Free Will Baptists of North Carolina had adopted in 1812, the Cape Fear Conference adopted the Articles of Faith subscribed to by the (Northern) General Conference of Freewill Baptists. This action was taken prior to 1883 in which the oldest extant copy of the new Discipline appeared in print. Article 12, on "Justification and Sanctification," appears exactly as it reads in the Northern Freewill Baptist statement of faith. The two doctrines are stated separately but under the same heading. The statement on sanctification declares that this work of God's grace "...commences at regeneration, and the Christian can and should abide in this state to the end of life, constantly growing in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ."

But in 1899, a revised edition of the Discipline of the Cape Fear Cape Conference appeared in print in which a major change is evident in the statement on sanctification. In this edition "Sanctification" appears as a separate article (Article 13). The statement introduces a distinction between the human and the divine role in sanctification and employs the word "instantaneous" to describe this work of divine grace, which "renders the believer's heart free from all sin," is obtained by faith, and is "subsequent to regeneration." The "holiness" version of the doctrine of sanctification had thus become a part of the Articles of Faith recognized by the Cape Fear Conference. The strange fact about this change in the Articles of Faith is that there is no reference in the minutes of the Conference in 1899 and previous years to any action taken by the Conference on this matter. The name of the moderator at that time appeared on the title page of this revised edition, but there is no reference in the document to a committee on revision. This raises the question as to who authorized this significant change and why it happened. It is apparent that sooner or later some persons belonging to churches which were members of this Conference became aware of the significance of this change in the statement on sanctification and began to raise objection to its inclusion in the Discipline. This inevitably led to dissension in the churches and among ministers of the Conference. By 1911, the issue had become so controversial that officials of the Conference decided to



use the current statement of faith in the Discipline as a test of fellowship for the seating of delegates and ministers at the 1911 session of the Conference, which was held at Long Branch Church, near Dunn, North Carolina. As a result, a minority of the ministers and delegates representing their churches at this session were not seated. They therefore decided to withdraw, and on January 12, 1912 they convened a meeting at Shady Grove Church, Sampson County, with the purpose of organizing themselves as the true Cape Fear Conference of Original Free Will Baptists. The churches represented at this meeting were as follows: Bethel, Oak Grove, Saint Paul, Lee's Chapel, Saint Mary's Grove, Prospect, Robert's Grove, Bizzell's Grove, Goldsboro, and Daly's Chapel. They adopted a resolution which included the following:

Resolved, Second, seeing that the so-called Cape Fear Conference has departed from the faith on the aforesaid doctrine of the Free Will Baptist, on the subject of sanctification and the baptism of the Holy Ghost, and the speaking in tongues as the only evidence; We, therefore, invite all churches and ministers who believe in the original doctrine as practiced by the Free Will Baptist, set forth in the discipline of the Cape Fear Conference prior to the revision in 1899, to unite in the deliberations of this body."

It was agreed that "churches and delegates will be enrolled by letter if the same is received before the proceedings of this meeting are published."

Following this special session a circular letter was sent to other churches in the Conference inviting them to meet with the next annual session scheduled for October 3-5, 1912 "to the end that the original faith of our fathers...may be re-enacted and re-adopted." Some churches not represented at the January meeting did later decide to affiliate with this Conference, but it was a few years before the division in the Conference was permanently settled.

The reference to "the baptism of the Holy Ghost" and "speaking in tongues as the only evidence" in the above resolution suggests that the controversy in the Cape Fear Conference concerning the doctrine of sanctification was further complicated by the influence of the Pentecostal movement, which was in its early stage of development in North Carolina and the nation. Most church historians agree that this movement had its beginning in Topeka, Kansas among the Bible students of C. F. Parham and that it received much publicity as a result of the Azusa Street revival in Los Angeles, California





under the direction of an African-American minister, W. J. Seymour. From here Pentecostal leaders spread out across the nation. It was introduced to eastern North Carolina by G. B. Cashwell, a Holiness minister, who having heard of the manifestation of Spirit baptism, went to California where he is said to have received the “baptism of the Holy Ghost.” He returned to his home near Dunn, North Carolina, and began a revival in that town which attracted thousands. Many were convinced that “speaking in tongues” was the sign that one had received the “baptism of the Holy Ghost.” The fact that this movement made its initial impact in the area of the Cape Fear Conference meant that Free Will Baptists living in that area would likely be subject to its influence. The resolution adopted by the churches’ representatives that met at Shady Grove Church on January 12, 1912 makes it clear that the Pentecostal interpretation of Spirit baptism had indeed been introduced into several churches of the Cape Fear Conference. It is likely that one of those churches was Long Branch Church, which is located in the vicinity of Dunn and was the host church of the Conference Meeting in 1911. That church did become a part of the denomination that took the name Cape Fear Free Will Baptist Holiness and many of their churches chose this name to distinguish themselves from other Free Will Baptist churches. In the course of time they organized three other conferences in North Carolina and then organized a General Conference in order to provide a greater unity to the denomination. Finally, in 1959 they chose the name “Pentecostal Free Will Baptist Church,” incorporated the organization, and gave it much greater authority. The denomination was divided into districts with a superintendent over each district and a general superintendent, along with other officers, presiding over the entire denomination. Their headquarters is located near Dunn, North Carolina, where they also operate a school known as Heritage Bible College. Long Branch Pentecostal Free Will Baptist Church serves both the headquarters and the college community. Long Branch was one of the eight original churches of the Cape Fear Conference in 1855 and prior to that was a member of the General Conference of Original Free Will Baptists as early as 1845.

At the regular session of the Conference, October 12, 1912, in the report of the ordaining council, several ministers had been examined, and found to be orthodox in the



original faith of the Free Will Baptists. Their names were enrolled as ordained ministers.

In the report of the education committee this statement was found:

Seeing the need of a better trained ministry that our ministry may be able to compete with those of other denominations, we recommend that our young ministers avail themselves of every opportunity possible to secure an education. We further recommend that they patronize our Free Will Baptist School at Ayden. As the Seminary belongs to the Free Will Baptist denomination, we recommend that each church in our conference send a donation to this Conference annually for the support of said Seminary and we urge each minister to see that a fund is raised in each church.

This resolution was also approved: "Whereas seeing our present condition that our rights and property are in litigation; be it resolved that each church be requested to raise at once and place in the hands of the executive committee a sufficient fund to defray the expense of any litigation that may come before us."

### **The Organization of the North Carolina State Convention**

It was in 1912 at the twentieth annual session of the Union Conference that a resolution was made by Dr. E. L. St. Claire that the name of this body be changed to the North Carolina State Convention of Original Free Will Baptists, that a new constitution and by-laws be drafted, that efforts be made to get all the Free Will Baptists in the eastern part of the state to be represented in the Convention, and that each church may be represented in the Convention. At this session new officers were elected, along with three members of the executive committee, a state mission board, and a committee on constitution and by-laws. Then, on September 17, 1913, the first annual session of the North Carolina State Convention was held at Bailey, NC.

Sixty-four churches, some by letter, reported to this first session and there were twenty ministers present, most of them from the Western Conference. Only one minister from the Cape Fear and one from the Eastern were enrolled at this session. Among the important items of business was the adoption of an earlier proposal in the Western Conference for the establishment of a Free Will Baptist Orphanage.



## **After the Split of 1911 and 1912**

Resuming our account of the Cape Fear Conference, at the 1913 session there was some discussion on the matter of establishing an orphanage. An orphanage committee was chosen “to confer with other conferences and the state convention” on this matter. In its report the education committee stated: “Seeing that the subject of an educated ministry confronts us, we recommend that each church pay their pastor enough to justify him in giving one day in each week to the study of the word. We further recommend that as many ministers as can avail themselves of the advantage of attending the Ayden Seminary.” All church clerks were asked to report all money that was paid for pastoral service. These figures would then be printed in a table in the annual minutes. One thousand copies of the minutes were to be printed that year.

In the 1914 session of the Conference, delegates were appointed to the Eastern, Western, and Central Conferences. A collection was received for the benefit of St. Mary’s Grove Church in the amount of \$10.26, which was to be the host church for the next Conference meeting. (No reason was given for the collection; perhaps the church was involved in litigation.) One thousand copies of the minutes of this session were to be printed. The mission board recommended that the Conference mission board be consolidated with the Union Meeting mission board. (A 1914 copy of the printed minutes of the of the Holiness-Pentecostal Cape Fear Conference reveals that “by motion, the money in the hands of Elder H. W. Jernigan was to be equally divided between Bizzell’s Grove and Pleasant Grove churches, to help pay expenses of the suits pending.” This action indicates that this group of churches was supporting factions in some of their member churches that were engaged in litigation with factions in those same churches that had not chosen to depart from the faith of Free Will Baptists on the doctrine of sanctification and baptism of the Holy Spirit.)

At the second annual session of the State Convention in 1914, attention was given to the fact that the Cape Fear Conference recognized a different discipline from that which had been used by Original Free Will Baptists, with slight revisions, since 1812. It seemed appropriate that some action was needed to reconcile this difference in disciplines in order to avoid confusion in matters of doctrine and polity among the churches and conferences belonging to the North Carolina Convention. Therefore, the body agreed to



a resolution which would assign to a committee of nine persons (two from each conference and a chairman) the task of preparing one Discipline that would govern the denomination. R. F. Pittman, a member of the Central Conference, was appointed chairman of the committee. When the Convention met the following year at Shady Grove Church, the committee charged with this assignment had failed to meet, so the Convention appointed a new committee of four men with R. F. Pittman as chairman. At the next annual session of the Convention in 1916, this committee reported that they had met and revised the Discipline and that their work had been ratified by the last sessions of the various conferences. Concerning the Articles of Faith, the committee had approved the same Articles of Faith as that found in the Discipline of the Cape Fear Conference without the change that was made in the doctrine of sanctification in 1899. As we shall observe later, this did not satisfy the majority of the members of the Convention very long.

At the 1915 meeting of the Cape Fear Conference, the moderator extended the hand of welcome to a visitor from the Presbyterian Church. The ministers and delegates voted unanimously to endorse the Articles of Faith being developed by the Convention. Delegates were appointed to the Western, Central, and Eastern Conferences. Up to \$25 was allowed to Pleasant Grove Church to help in litigation. Factions from this church were attending the meetings of both Cape Fear Conferences. (As indicated above, a faction of this church was being helped with litigation by the Cape Fear Holiness-Pentecostal Conference.) A fee was assessed (10 cents per male member if possible) to churches of the Cape Fear Conference to help meet the Conference's obligation to Ayden Seminary, by Dec. 31 if possible. Enthusiasm among the people was being demonstrated toward "an educated ministry" and continued endorsement of Ayden Seminary for the training of new ministers. (In the 1915 minutes of the Holiness-Pentecostal group, there was a motion "to demand of W. A. Jackson [listed as secretary in 1913] our book of records." In fact, this book of records was kept in the care of our Cape Fear Conference.)

At the 1916 session of the Conference, a motion was approved to purchase stock of the Free Will Baptist Printing Company, which was valued at \$10 per share and could be bought by conferences, union meetings, churches, and individuals. There was an enthusiastic discussion on the orphanage proposal and a "motion to ask for the hearty





cooperation of our churches in this great cause” was approved. Another motion requested that each church send in money to a state mission fund. Still another motion was approved that “we defer till next conference the resolution making the State Convention the chief executive body.” The recommendation of the education committee was adopted as follows:

- That younger men be required to have at least an eighth grade education before being licensed to preach.
- Older ministers add to their knowledge by diligently studying the word.
- Laity to assist in every way consistent to secure an educated ministry.

The following motion was approved: “Seeing the need of a better cooperation among the conferences and for the betterment of the Printing Company at Ayden, we recommend to the churches that we purchase at least \$500 in stock from the FWB Printing Company and that each pastor ask their churches to raise a reasonable amount of said stock.”

At the 1917 session, a free will offering (\$69.68) was received for Brother Lonnie Ennis who was then in school at Ayden Seminary. In the afternoon of the 2<sup>nd</sup> day, the education committee reported that this appears to be the first student from the Cape Fear to attend the Ayden Seminary. (L. R. Ennis is listed as a licentiate in 1918 and preached the opening sermon at the night meeting in 1918. He was approved for ordination at the 1921 Conference meeting.) The orphanage situation was discussed briefly. (The Orphanage Board had received a gift of fifty acres of land near Middlesex, NC on which the first building was under construction.) There was a report from the ordaining council that more than half of the ministers are over 60 years of age and some have had to abandon the work due to physical weakness. The younger preachers are doing all the work they can do. A resolution was passed to allow the education board of the Conference to cooperate with the education board of the Union Meeting and if possible use their funds for the same purpose.

According to the printed minutes, Brother Z. Taylor, the Conference moderator, had died between the 1917 and 1918 meeting. Though not an ordained minister, a motion was approved to include his obituary in the minutes and time was requested to prepare his obituary. (His obituary was not found in the minutes.) It was noted that the



Cape Fear Conference was cooperating with the Eastern, Western, and Central Conferences to have Disciplines printed for all conferences in the Convention. Elder B. P. Parks was chosen as a delegate to represent the Conference at a meeting of the Co-operative General Association in Paintsville, Kentucky (He is not listed as a delegate from North Carolina at that meeting.) Prior to this time, money raised for educational purposes was given to ministerial students. The Educational Committee now recommended that in the future money be loaned instead of given to students studying for the ministry.

In 1919, a motion was approved to recommend that the treasurer deposit all funds in some reliable bank to the credit of the Cape Fear Conference. A free will offering (\$39.00) was received to help Rock Ridge Church. Brother W. A. Jackson was chosen to represent the Conference as a member of the Orphanage Board of Trustees. In the Education Committee's report, it was recommended that the Conference endorse the \$50,000 bond asked for by the Ayden Seminary and ask for 50 percent of education funds go directly to Ayden Seminary while 50 percent be used to help students seeking an education. The Education Committee report also insisted that young ministers avail themselves of every opportunity possible for an education.

Rev. M. C. Prescott presented a report of the Orphanage, urging all churches to make Thanksgiving Day a great rally day in the collection for the Orphanage. This entreaty for the Orphanage Thanksgiving collection received a very favorable response from the churches, not only for this year but for succeeding years. A motion was approved to allocate funds to: Orphanage - 40 percent; Education - 15 percent; Home Missions - 12.5 percent; Press - 12.5 percent; and Miscellaneous - 20 percent. In a further action, the Ordination Council reported that J. W. Lucas had been found orthodox. It is not clear if this entry refers to the same J. W. Lucas listed as the moderator responsible for the "unauthorized" revision of the Articles of Faith in the 1899 Discipline.

Among the topics in the 1920 session, there was a general discussion of taking over some stock of the printing company and publishing a song book. Efforts to join hands with the temperance movement in the state and nation were growing. Total abstinence from alcoholic beverages had become the rule as the eighteenth amendment to the federal constitution came into effect on January 16, 1920. There was an urgent plea



for churches to help with Ayden Seminary. The FWB Orphanage received its first children in 1920. A motion was approved to allocate Conference funds to: the Orphanage - 40 percent; Education – 20 percent; Press – 20 percent; Miscellaneous – 20 percent. (Note: Home Missions was eliminated.) Other actions taken at this session include:

- Ministers were asked to use any available time to work on missions opportunities and to send \$50 from the mission fund to Rock Ridge Church.
- A vote to endorse the resolution adopted at the last session of the Convention (1920) relating to the printing company. W. A. Jackson elected to represent the Conference.
- A representative of the Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA) of Johnston County was given an opportunity to speak.
- The Conference endorsed the State Convention resolution of 1920 to publish a song book.

At the 1921 session, W. A. Jackson was elected as delegate to attend the second General Conference meeting to be held in Marshal, NC. (The first meeting was held in Nashville, TN. This was an organization of Free Will Baptists in the southeastern United States.) Prior to 1921, there no provision had been made for disabled ministers. The Apportionment Committee was directed to set aside funds out of the general fund from time to time to help disabled ministers in the future. An adjustment was made in the assessment of fees from the churches for the general fund. The new assessment of 25 cents per member was more realistic than the previous goal of \$1.00 for each male and 50 cents for each female. A motion was approved to allocate funds to the Orphanage – 25 percent; Education - 30 percent; Press – 15 percent; and Miscellaneous – 30 percent. The Education Committee reported that the proposed college at Ayden was under construction and hopes were that it would reach completion by Sept. 1, 1922. People were asked to support this effort. (The Seminary was closed for one year to concentrate on the development of the proposed college.)

On the first afternoon of the 1922 meeting, in the absence of a quorum, it was voted "to proceed with the business of the Conference subject to the approval of a quorum when present," so, "A round table discussion was held upon various subjects pertaining to the work of the Conference." Brother W. B. Everett, the financial agent of the Free Will Baptist College, made a strong appeal for the Conference to support the



College. At this session delegates were elected to the State Convention, the General Conference, and the Eastern, Central, and Western Conferences.

Since there was not a quorum present at the beginning of the session in 1923, it was decided to continue subject to approval of actions when a quorum was present. Dr. Herbert was present from the Orphanage. A motion was approved to erect one of the proposed buildings at the Orphanage at a cost of \$3,000 to \$5,000. Churches would be asked to raise the funds. The entire fund apportioned for educational purposes (\$45.77) was to be paid to the College fund at Ayden. A secretary was appointed to make needed changes in the governance of the Sunday school and print the changes in the Conference minutes. Detailed procedures were given to divide the Conference into three Sunday school districts. A highly organized structure and instructions for reporting were given. The Conference recommended that all ministers be required to attend the first day and remain for all the sessions of the Conference. Ministers are to strictly comply with requirements of the Discipline for receiving members from other churches of faith and order. B. P. Parks was chosen to represent the Cape Fear Conference at the upcoming General Conference. Additional actions taken at this session include: (1) \$15 was given to help Pleasant Grove Church; (2) \$25 was designated to the Disabled Minister's Fund; and (3) all the money in the education fund was given to Ayden College.

At the 1924 session of the Conference, the five year program adopted at the previous State Convention was approved. This program had set goals that proved to be too ambitious to achieve. Some money was given to the Disabled Minister's Fund. Delegates were elected to represent the Cape Fear at the Central, Eastern, and Western Conferences; the State Convention; and the General Conference. It was decided at this session that the money apportioned to the Orphanage be placed to the credit of the Cape Fear Building Fund at the Orphanage. It was noted that Rock Ridge Church, which was destroyed by a storm, would not be moved to Coats because the members have gone to other churches. Ministers and church workers were encouraged to attend the Christian Workers Summer School at Ayden. A calendar was printed which showed which Sunday in the month each church held services.

In 1925, W. B. Everett, financial agent of the college at Ayden, made a "forcible" address in behalf of the needs of the college; \$39.75 was donated. This was the first year





that Eureka College was operated at Ayden. W. A. Jackson resigned from the College Board and B. P. Parks was elected in his place. The Education Committee reported that \$55.83 was given to Herman Wooten and a loan was made to him in the amount of \$66.97 to help him obtain an education. Thomas E. Beaman was given \$44.65 for seminary expenses.

Because a quorum was not present when the 1926 session opened, business of the Conference was continued subject to the approval of a quorum when present. Motion was approved to distribute the Disciplines now on hand to the churches to give to the members. A total of \$24.06 was collected to help the church at Smithfield which was then erecting a building. It was reported that no mission work was being done due to a lack of funds. It was announced that a prize of \$10.00 in gold would be given to the minister who sold the most subscriptions to *The Free Will Baptist*. (In September 1926, the new building at Eureka College was first used.) Churches were encouraged to support the organization of the FWB Leagues (a weekly program for youth). A resolution against the teaching of evolution in both public and private schools was approved and a second resolution to encourage family devotions instead of teaching jazz and the pleasures of ungodliness was approved.

At the 1927 meeting of the Conference R. B. Spencer, President of Eureka College, was present and spoke on behalf of the College. It was decided to grant an endowment of \$5000 (interest only) to the College. \$30.25 was collected and credited to the first year's interest. White Oak Grove Church (Lenoir County) joined the Conference with a letter of recommendation from the Eastern Conference. There were reports that friction existed between some of our ministers but there was not enough time to investigate this fully. No mission work was reported because all mission work was being handled by the Union Meeting.

In 1928, B. P. Parks, who served on the executive committee and the ordaining council of the Conference, the College Board of Trustees, and was the Conference treasurer, was excommunicated and was asked to resign from all offices held on the charge of mishandling of funds to build the dormitory at the Orphanage.

A committee recommended disapproval of the Treatise submitted by the General Conference on the grounds that it was not an improvement over the present Treatise. It



was acknowledged that plans were needed to raise the remainder of the money for the endowment to Eureka College. Rev. W. H. Crofts was endorsed as an independent Baptist missionary. The executive committee reported investigating a dispute between Prospect Church and Rev. W. R. Coates. They declared the matter was settled. Rev. Ezekiel Westbrook was found guilty of conduct unbecoming a minister. His credentials were demanded.

At the 1929 session, a visiting minister from the Georgia Union Association was recognized. The Conference adopted the State Convention plan to "liquidate the indebtedness of Eureka College." It was resolved to establish a system of rotating members off the ordaining council after a term of six years. Ministers were urged to "refrain from patronizing filling stations and stores on the Lord's Day and that they condemn such practice among the laity." There was more controversy over B. P. Parks concerning money, his preaching a sermon at Lee's Chapel, etc. Ezekiel Westbrook was excommunicated upon a vote of this Conference meeting.

At the 1930 meeting, it was agreed to make room in the statistical tables for reports from the Ladies' Aid and the Young Peoples' Leagues. There was some discussion concerning a communication that the term "Original" be used in the denominational name. It had apparently not been used in the Cape Fear Conference documents. On motion the matter would be taken under consideration and discussed fully. A sum of \$20.00 was collected and applied to a bond held by J. C. Ellis against Ayden Seminary. Delegates from the South Carolina Conference were recognized. A resolution was approved to ask churches and families "not to have their picnics or social gatherings at bathing beaches, swimming pools, or any other place of worldly amusements or haunts of sin." People were asked to not loaf at filling stations with the ungodly on Sundays and to support "dry" candidates in local and national elections. No mission work was reported again this year. The churches were asked to supply money, clothing, and food for the Orphanage. A Thanksgiving service offering for the Orphanage was initiated in the churches.



## **The Great Depression Era**

In 1931, the entire nation was feeling the effects of “the Great Depression” and it was also felt in the churches. The matter of education loans for ministers was discussed. It was concluded that these loans must have security and that conference loans to ministers could be forgiven after ten years of service as a minister. Eureka College had closed its doors in 1928 and its debt had been in foreclosure since then. There was a serious problem of raising money to pay off the indebtedness. The main building was destroyed by fire in 1931.

The Ladies’ Aid Societies throughout the Convention had organized a state convention in 1927, with the first meeting held at the Goldsboro Church. At that time, the Ladies’ Aid of Shady Grove Church asked for authorization to form an organization in the Cape Fear Conference. This was granted. It was agreed that a meeting of all the Leagues and Ladies’ Aids of the Conference would be called.

A report of the newly formed Ladies’ Aid Auxiliary was read and included in the minutes of the Conference in 1932. The LaGrange Church asked for an honorable discharge to unite with the Central Conference. A motion was offered to change from a 3-day to a 2-day conference, but the motion was tabled until the next annual meeting. There was not enough money to print the usual 1000 copies of the minutes, so it was decided that 500 would be printed. Each church was asked to send in an additional contribution to the Conference as soon as possible. The Conference expressed its opposition to the repeal of the 18<sup>th</sup> Amendment to the federal constitution or modification of the Volstead Law. (The 18<sup>th</sup> Amendment was repealed in 1933.) There was no report of mission work and there was no money in the mission fund. Obituaries for Elder J. W. Moore and Elder D. C. Johnson were included in the minutes.

The motion to change from a 3-day to a 2-day conference that was tabled at the last annual meeting was taken from the table and it passed in 1933. A visitor from the Methodist Church (not identified) was welcomed at this session. Elder J. C. Griffin ended his long tenure as moderator of the Conference. In later years, he was an active member of the Eastern Conference. The missions committee recommended that everyone stay in close contact with the mission board of the General Conference (referred



to as the U. S. mission board in the minutes) and cooperate with them in any worthy cause. The obituary for Elder J. R. Wallace was in the minutes of this session.

A motion that was brought over from the meeting in 1933 to form a committee of laymen to appoint ministers to the churches was tabled indefinitely. The vote was 37 to 2. There was some discussion of a Bible School that was started at the Smithfield Church in 1933. The church was facing a financial crisis which prompted them to offer the church property to the Convention with these provisions: (1) that it be used as a Bible School, (2) that the Convention assume the mortgage on the property, and (3) that the church be allowed to continue using the facility for regular church services. The Convention approved these conditions and a deed to the property was given to the recording secretary. The property was later returned to the church following the formation of the Church Finance Association in 1940, through which arrangements were made to pay off the mortgage.

At the 1935 session, the Conference bought five shares of stock in the Press at \$10 each. A vote revealed that the Conference was opposed to the action of the General Assembly of North Carolina to create ABC stores. The Conference indicated support of an anticipated educational initiative at the upcoming first meeting of the National Association in Nashville, TN. The idea was that the Co-operative General Association in the mid-West and the General Conference in the Southeast could come together to form the National Association of Free Will Baptists in order to provide a viable educational program for ministers and a viable program of missions. This appealed to many Free Will Baptists at that time. Ministers and delegates were urged to be careful of harmful speech, especially about brother preachers. The Conference urged support of the missionaries in the field through the General Conference Foreign Mission Board. (The minutes referred to the State Convention Mission Board, but this is clearly an error.)

In 1936, the Conference chose delegates to various conferences and associations: Western, Eastern, Central, the General Conference, the State Convention, the Pee Dee, and the Rockfish. There was a call for support and donations to the Orphanage. Many needed improvements were listed for the buildings, the grounds, the farm, and the livestock. Summer camp, which was sponsored by the Sunday school and to be held at Camp Leach, was promoted. Support for the National Association's establishment of an





educational institute for the training of ministers was encouraged. The Cape Fear Conference agreed to change its name to Cape Fear Association in cooperation with the National Association. Each church was asked to designate one Sunday as Mission Sunday each year.

At the 1937 meeting, two members were appointed to work cooperatively with other representatives from other associations in the State Convention. This joint group was to be called the General Church Board. Their duties involved giving oversight to the entire program of the Convention and making recommendations for action or promotion.

Dr. W. H. Carter, a Holiness FWB minister, was involved in a controversy with the Cape Fear Holiness FWB group and this was reported in the local newspapers as being a controversy within the Free Will Baptist Church. A committee was chosen from the various OFWB associations to meet with the Holiness group to ask them to not use our denominational name in the future. They were to report back any results of the meeting. It was reported that only four of 22 churches gave \$5.00 or more for missions as requested. Only seven of 22 churches raised any money at all for missions. This appeared to be an indication of the "hard times" that many were facing during the Great Depression.

In 1936, Elder and Mrs. Thomas H. Willey were endorsed by the General Conference to serve as missionaries to Panama. The Cape Fear Conference pledged to support them in 1938. The Conference was continuing its efforts to help the Smithfield Church pay off its indebtedness through the State Convention and also pledged continuing support of the Orphanage. Their concern for the Smithfield Church was an indication of a concern for missions even though it was reported that no mission work had been done.

In the 1939 meeting, it was reported by the Superintendent at the Orphanage that \$1,051.59 had been raised through the Cape Fear Association during the previous year. R. B. Spencer was extended thanks for his six years of service as moderator. There was a report of mission work being done in Clinton, NC. An obituary for Elder D. R. Ennis was to be included in the minutes. There was a call for the support of the efforts in behalf of education for young people by the National Association. A called meeting was scheduled to address the need of mission work in the Cape Fear Association.



In 1940, a dining hall was under construction at the Orphanage and \$800 was needed to complete this facility. The mission at West Clinton was organized as a church and it was received as a member church in the Association.

A singing group from the Orphanage, including a quartet and solos, gave a performance at the Association in 1941. There was a call for cooperation with the State Association and other associations across the country to create a junior college in central North Carolina with a strong Bible department. Some wanted the National Association to establish a college in North Carolina but this did not happen. Action was taken to change the name of the Cape Fear Association back to the Cape Fear Conference.

### **The World War II Era**

At the 1942 meeting it was declared that “The Conference will subscribe to one of the Foundation Checks for the Bible School in Nashville, TN.” An update was given on the work of the auxiliaries in the Conference. A girl’s trio from the Orphanage sang during a worship service. Retired minister W. R. Coates gave a report of his past and current work. Because of his lamentable financial situation he was asked to stand by the table while the congregation came forward and gave him their hand as a token of their appreciation for his services. He received gifts amounting to \$101.52 for which he expressed his appreciation. The Conference expressed hearty approval of the work at both state and national levels. It was noted that 5 of the 85 children at the Orphanage were from the Cape Fear Conference. The Board of Trustees at the Orphanage established a program whereby supporters of the Orphanage could purchase Defense Bonds (for the war effort) in the name of the Orphanage to be used to build a chapel at the right time in the future.

The Ministerial Association of North Carolina Free Will Baptists was at this time cooperating with the Ladies’ Auxiliary Convention, the Sunday School Convention, and the League Convention in seeking a place for a youth summer camp facility. They asked for the cooperation of the Conference, in 1943, in finding such a place. Camp Leach, on the Pamlico River, had been used that summer for the youth but was not available in the summer of 1944. The Conference decided in 1943 to increase the number serving on the Ordaining Council from three to five members. Also, the decision was made by the



Conference to follow the lead of the State Convention in sending 25 percent of money received to the Unified Program of the National Association. At the request of this session, the 1855 Constitution of the Conference was reprinted in the minutes. In this same year, Rev. L. R. Ennis, who had been serving as Executive Secretary of the National Association, was installed as President of the Free Will Baptist Bible College. He served for two years in that capacity. In 1945, the National Association initiated a campaign to raise \$100,000 for the Bible College and the North Carolina Convention was asked to raise one-fifth of the total amount. Churches of the Cape Fear Conference were supportive of this effort.

It was also in the summer of 1945 that the property of Cragmont Assembly was acquired by the joint efforts of the various state organizations working together. This property included a large building and some smaller ones located on 115 acres of land near Black Mountain, NC. Churches and individuals of the Cape Fear Conference gave support to this campaign to raise the necessary funds. In the 1945 session, the Conference did not approve a resolution sent from the State Convention dealing with the authority over the misconduct of ministers in the conference. Action was taken to purchase a \$25 membership in the Church Finance Association, which had been formed in 1940 to help churches such as the Smithfield Church to pay off their mortgages and later to lend money to churches and denominational institutions for building or repairing needed facilities. The Temperance Committee seemed resigned to the failure to prohibit the sale of alcohol but decided to make its objections permanent. A report from the Woman's Auxiliary revealed that there were 16 auxiliaries in the Conference with 377 members and that nine churches had no auxiliaries.

### **The Post World War II Era**

At the 1946 session, there were visiting delegates from the following conferences: Albemarle, Rockfish, South Carolina, Pee Dee, Eastern and Western. Elder J. C. Griffin, Field Secretary of the State Convention, spoke briefly on the work of the state and national organizations and outlined the Five Point Program. Elder J. A. Evans, Superintendent of the Orphanage, addressed the Conference and an offering of \$144.84 was received for this cause. Appointment of delegates was made to the following



conferences: Western, Central, Eastern, Pee Dee, Rockfish, Piedmont, Jack's Creek, Toe River, French Broad and Albemarle. Stevens Chapel, recently organized by Elder G. S. Stevens, was admitted to the Conference. A report of the N.C. Board of Superannuation revealed that two Cape Fear ministers had insurance policies through the program and two Cape Fear ministers were receiving monthly checks. The goal for the Conference activities in the coming year was \$7,500. The total received the previous year was \$590.21. A system of recognizing and certifying the length of service of ministers was adopted. A resolution was adopted to limit special offerings at the Conference to those received during worship services with an exception made for the Orphanage. The offering for the Orphanage would continue to be a part of the program. A report was made showing the progress of each church toward fulfilling its assigned quota for the \$3,500 goal of the Conference for the Free Will Baptist Bible College. A total of \$626.85 had been raised. It was reported that 7 of the 74 children at the Orphanage were from the Cape Fear Conference.

In 1947, the Conference began with prayer at the altar. Elder J. C. Griffin, Field Secretary of the State Convention, reported that 49 percent of the money received by the State Treasurer came from the Cape Fear Conference. By motion the Conference gave \$70.50 to Wooten's Chapel. A report of the N.C. Board of Superannuation showed that three Cape Fear ministers had insurance policies through the program. A report revealed that some churches had conducted Vacation Bible Schools, and other churches were encouraged to do the same. It was also suggested that churches conduct Sunday school teacher training. It was reported that the largest amount ever received by the Orphanage from this Conference was given last year, which amounted to \$3,162.05.

In 1948, the Conference gave a tribute to Willie A. Jackson, a layman from Shady Grove, who had died on November 11, 1947. Brother Jackson had served as the Clerk for the Conference for 44 years and was instrumental in the Conference's work with the Beulah School and with Eureka College. Brother Jackson was also a sound progressive leader for the Board of Trustees of the Orphanage, which he chaired for many years (from the *Free Will Baptist*, November 19, 1947). In other action at the 1948 meeting, a report from the Orphanage showed that of a total of 76 children at the Orphanage, 8 were from the Cape Fear Conference. The First Free Will Baptist Church of Raleigh was





admitted to the Conference. Another report showed that 217 people had completed the Conference's new Sunday school training program.

At the 1949 session, Lanwood Chapel was admitted to the Conference and its delegates were seated. Rules and regulations governing the Mission Board were adopted. The Woman's Auxiliary of the Cape Fear Conference reported a good year's work, with an auxiliary in every church except two. The constitution of the Union Meeting of the Cape Fear Conference was provided in the minutes of this session. The Ordaining Council urged that each church ensure that any candidate they recommend for ordination be qualified for the work required of him and that he have work awaiting him.

In the 1950 minutes, a biographical sketch of the life and labors of Rev. William Ruffin Coates was printed on the fly page (and continued on page 28). Resolutions in the minutes include the following: (1) "That we dedicate the minutes of this session to the memory of Rev. Coates," (2) "That the said minutes carry a full page devoted to his picture, and suitable wording, etc., and (3) that the opposite page be devoted to his life's story." It was reported that James Earl Raper was enrolled in school at Nashville, TN, studying for the ministry. It was also reported that T. C. Smith and Albert T. Coates were ordained to the ministry on October 18, 1950. Included in these minutes are the Constitution and By-Laws of the Cape Fear Conference of the Original Free Will Baptists of North Carolina. The Smyrna Church in Johnston County was also admitted to the Conference at this session.

At the 1951 session of the Conference, the Executive Board reported that they had adopted "Resolutions Regulating Aid to Church Building Projects" on November 26, 1950. The Conference would receive several requests from churches for such aid in the coming years. The report of the Board of Education was quite extensive, including the following: (1) Daily Vacation Bible Schools, (2) Bible College and Student Loan Fund, (3) College Quartet, (4) Student Loan Fund, (5) Training Program, (6) Youth Meetings, and (7) Family Life. For the next few years the reports of this Board were extensive. With regard to the Student Loan Fund, it was reported that James Earl Raper and Mary Lou Raper were at the Bible College and must be helped by the Conference.

Also at the 1951 session was the following Resolution:



The Cape Fear Conference of Original Free Will Baptists in session November 2, 1951 does by unanimous vote hereby protest the action of President Harry S. Truman in appointing or nominating General Mark Clark, or any other citizen of this country, as ambassador to the State of the Vatican City upon the ground that the appointment is in conflict with the principle of separation of Church and State.

Another resolution read, "That Rev. W. H. Lancaster be elected as honorary member of the Board of Ordination for life because of his long and efficient service on that board." The Board of Superannuation reported that one minister was receiving a monthly pension check and two ministers' widows were receiving regular quarterly pension checks. The Board of Missions and Church Extension identified some of the special objectives of its ambitious "GO-FORWARD" Program, including: (1) Rehabilitation of Present Churches, (2) Relocation of Some Churches, (3) Rebuilding and Remodeling Churches, (4) Landscaping and Beautification of Grounds, and (5) Promotion of the Go-Forward Program. The Board of Ordination reported that Robert M. Fader, Leonard Woodall, and W. A. Martin were licensed to preach on November 2, 1951.

In 1952, The Board of Missions and Church Extension reported that the Conference churches contributed to missions, including Foreign Missions, State and National Missions, and Cape Fear Missions, the sum of \$1,098.88 during the year. Donations to the Orphanage for the period from November 1, 1951 to October 25, 1952 were \$5,029.16; the value of donated commodities was \$5,412.63. The Board of Ordination reported that Robert M. Fader was ordained at Bethel FWB Church on June 29, 1952 and that Leonard Woodall and W. A. Martin were ordained at Smithfield Church on October 27, 1952.

At the 1953 session, Rev. David W. Hansley, chairman of the State Convention's Board of Education, was allowed to speak on Christian education. The Convention had approved the purchase of an old public school property in Mount Olive, at a cost of \$25,000, in September of 1953, for Mount Allen Junior College. Rev. William Burkette Raper, State Promotional Director, was recognized and gave a report of his work with the Convention. It was reported that \$6,401.75 had been given to the Orphanage by the Cape Fear churches from October 1, 1952 to September 30, 1953.



The One Hundredth Annual Session of the Cape Fear Conference convened at the Casey's Chapel Church, Wayne County, NC on November 4, 5, 1954. The moderator, Rev. J. R. Davidson, presented Rev. Clarence Bowen, professor of Christian Education at the Free Will Baptist Bible College, Nashville, TN, who delivered the Conference centennial sermon. Speakers for the afternoon session were as follows: Dr. L. C. Johnson, Rev. Burkette Raper, Rev. S. A. Smith, Rev. J. O. Fort, Rev. D. W. Alexander, Rev. Rashie Kennedy, Rev. Damon C. Dodd, and Rev. M. L. Johnson. All churches of the Cape Fear reported at this session. There were 40 ministers, 62 delegates and 197 visitors present. It was moved and carried that Rev. L. R. Ennis and Rev. J. R. Davidson meet with the State Convention Revision Committee to revise the North Carolina Treatise. Rev. James A. Evans, Promotional Director for Mt. Allen Junior College, was recognized. He expressed his appreciation to the churches of the Cape Fear Conference for their support to the college.

At the 1955 session of the Conference, Rev. R. N. Hinnant was recognized by the moderator. He had served on the revision committee for "The Discipline" of the Convention and, after discussion of the revised form of "The Discipline," he expressed the hope that the Cape Fear Conference would adopt it. Rev. J. R. Davidson offered a motion that the Conference adopt it and the motion was carried. Rev. Allen Bryan delivered the Conference sermon. A motion was made by Rev. C. H. Coates that the Conference approve the conference boundary lines as recommended by the Executive Board of the Convention and the State Mission Board and the motion was carried. The Board of Education offered a suggested pledge form for Sunday school teachers and officers to sign. The pledge may be adapted to meet local needs but it has proved helpful to those now using such a pledge. Under this plan no one was allowed to hold office or teach in the Sunday school unless they sign the pledge.

In the minutes of the 1956 session, a report on the progress of Mount Olive Jr. College was given. \$200 was to be sent to the Bible College in Nashville, TN and \$100 was to be sent to Mount Olive Jr. College. The Board of Education submitted a proposed program for 1957, which included the following: Christian Family Life Emphasis; Stewardship and Tithing Emphasis; Organization of Leagues and Training of League Workers; Promotion of Sunday School Rally Days; Conferences for Pastors and



Deacons; Continuation of the Evangelical Teacher Training Program; Christian Literature Emphasis; Utilization of Visual Aids in Teaching; Study Courses for Children; Music Clinics and Workshops for the Training of Song Leaders and Others in all Phases of Music and Worship; How to Lead a Choir; How to Lead Evangelistic Singing; and Arranging Orders of Worship. Additionally, there were offerings on Free Will Baptist Doctrines; Bible Conferences; Sunday School Contests and Extension Work; and conferences, clinics, and workshops to strengthen the local church. On page 13 of the printed minutes for this session, a Comprehensive Pledge was provided which was to be signed by Sunday school teachers and officers.

Also at the 1956 session, the Ordaining Council reported it had annulled the credentials of a minister for "voluntary inactivity." The Woman's Auxiliary, then in its 24<sup>th</sup> year, reported continued growth, with membership exceeding 500. At the spring conference the program was dedicated to Evelyn and Fred Hersey, who are at that time the only missionaries from the Cape Fear Conference on the foreign field. The Auxiliaries reported offering several study courses and youth programs and a Founders Day program planned for the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the State Auxiliary Convention. The Conference voted to give \$75 to home missions toward the purchase of a tent to be used in the establishment of new churches.

In the 1957 printed minutes, there is an obituary, dedication, and a picture in memory of Rev. Herman Rudolph Faircloth. A motion was approved to gather and print the constitution of the Conference in the minutes. Rev. W. Burkette Raper gave a report on the needs of Mount Olive Jr. College, then in its fourth year of operation at Mount Olive. The Executive Board was authorized to appoint delegates to the state and national conventions. The Board of Ordination changed its name to Ordaining Council in order to be compatible with the name used by other conferences or associations. A student loan in the amount of \$125 was made to Miss Eula Mae Martin who was studying to be a missionary nurse. Copies of the following are printed in the minutes of this session: (1) Bylaws Governing the Board of Missions, (2) Constitution and Bylaws of the Cape Fear Conference, and (3) Constitution of the Union Meeting of the Cape Fear Conference. These documents were included in minutes of the conference for many years to come.





The minutes of the 104<sup>th</sup> annual session of the Conference show that it convened at St. Mary's Grove Church, Johnston County on Thursday and Friday, October 30 and 31, 1958. As a result of a motion at this session, the minutes were published along with the minutes of the State Convention of Churches and the State Sunday School Institute. The report of the Board of Education was quite extensive, covering a variety of activities in the churches. Because the National Association of FWBs was scheduled to meet in Asheville, NC in 1959, a resolution was approved which stated among other things "That we inform our churches of their obligation to help underwrite the expenses for the entertainment of the said National Association." Some of the leadership of the Conference felt a special loyalty to that body as will be seen in future sessions.

At the 105<sup>th</sup> annual session, held at Hopewell Church, Johnston County, an announcement was made by Rev. Herman Hersey that all the churches of the Conference were represented and that the majority had sent in the amount of donation requested by the Conference (\$10 for each 100 members). In the report of the Obituary Committee, tribute was paid to Brother Kirby West, a member of Shady Grove Church, who had served the Conference in a number of official capacities. The report of the Executive Board was extensive, with four regular meetings and two called meetings. Minutes of the last meeting included proposed constitutional amendments and four major resolutions to be presented at the 1959 session, all of which involved important matters of conference business.

At the 1960 annual session of the Conference the morning sermon on Thursday was brought by Rev. Harold Stevens, returned missionary to Africa, using Romans 10: 14, 15 as his text. The morning sermon on Friday was brought by Rev. and Mrs. Wesley Calvery, missionaries to Japan. The churches of Garner and Mt. Olive were received into the conference as the two newest members, and the hand of welcome was extended to the pastors and delegates by the moderator. In the report of the Executive Board, it was reported that some meetings involved negotiations for admitting these two churches into the conference. At a meeting of that Board on October 31, 1960, it was reported that applications from some churches in the Western Conference had been received by the Board, including Tippet's Chapel, Shady Grove, Oak Grove, Sherron Acres, Fellowship, Saints Delight, and Calvary FWB Churches. Motions were approved recommending that



these churches be received under the watch care of the Conference pending the receipt of letters of good standing from the Western Conference. In the report of the Ordaining Council, it was recommended that the following ministers be received into our Conference: Frank Davenport, Eugene Waddell, Cary Watkins, Wingate Hansley. The reason for this proposed transfer of churches and ministers was due to the issues in the Western Conference involving Edgemont Church and its pastor, Rev. Ronald Creech, who had entered suit against Western Conference officials in the amount of \$400,000 just prior to the meeting of the Western Conference in 1960.

### **Separation from the National Association**

In the 1961 meeting of the National Association, actions were taken which precipitated a crisis in the relationship between the North Carolina Convention and the national organization. The issues that had placed a strain on that relationship included problems involving the Free Will Baptist Press and the National Sunday School Board, differences in the militant fundamentalist philosophy of education represented by the Bible College in Nashville as opposed to the philosophy of Mount Olive College as a liberal arts institution, and the issues that arose in the Edgemont Church in Durham and its pastor versus the Western Conference officials, leading to civil cases in the court system of North Carolina. Because of the use of the term “connectional church government” in an affidavit signed by North Carolina ministers, some of whom were serving on boards and commissions of the National Association, seven men were abruptly unseated from offices they held in the national body without any hearing on the matter. The controversy was widely discussed in both newspapers and in church publications. This led to the decision by the North Carolina Convention in a special session held in March 1962 to withdraw from the National Association.

At the 1962 session of the Cape Fear Conference, it soon was evident that changes would occur. Rev. L. R. Ennis offered his resignation as moderator of the Conference, which was accepted by a vote of 65 to 18. Rev. C. F. Bowen was nominated and elected to succeed him at this session. A motion was made that a rising vote of appreciation be extended to Rev. Ennis for his service to and guidance of this Conference during the past several years and was passed by unanimous vote. When the report of the



Executive Board was given and received, it was followed by another motion that it be reread and approved item by item. A motion was made that the watch care relationship of the Edgemont FWB Church (James A. Miles Associates) be suspended until such time as they shall receive a letter of recommendation from the Western Conference, adopted 54 to 14. Also, on this issue, the following action was taken:

Motion: Whereas Billy Morris, G. C. Lee, Q. G. Worrell, Ronald Creech, Ralph Clegg, Lonnie Graves, Conrad Williford, Wingate Hansley, Ronnie Peele, and Charles Bryant have been denied letters of recommendation from their respective conferences, move that their watch care membership, or otherwise, in this Conference be suspended until such time as they may receive such letters of recommendation. Adopted.

There were other parts of the report of the Executive Board that were rejected by action of the Conference when each item was presented at this session. Clearly the Conference did not approve of actions approved by the board which revealed a bias against the Western Conference officials in their attempts to deal with the Edgemont Church and its pastor. The churches in the Western Conference that had requested to be under the watch care of the Cape fear Conference at the 1961 session were denied their request at this session until such time as they may be able to bring letters of recommendation to this Conference. The Reverends Eugene Waddell and Herman L. Hersey tendered their resignation to the offices they held in the Cape Fear Conference. The report of the Resolutions Committee included six resolutions. Resolution Number 5 is of interest:

“Whereas our sister conference, the Western Conference, has experienced much embarrassment and unfavorable publicity by reason of the defiance of its established customs, usages, and practices by one Ronald Creech, who not only defied the conference of which he was a member but has also sued the members of the executive committee and board of ordination for \$400,000, and whereas some members of the conference have been closely associated with Ronald Creech during his defiance of the Western Conference; therefore be it resolved: 1. That this 107<sup>th</sup> annual session of the Conference does hereby join the Western Conference in an appeal to the Superior Court of Wake County for a non-suit in the \$400,000 libel suit. 2. That we do hereby state that it is the conviction of this Conference that our sister conference, the Western Conference, acted in keeping with its established customs, usages, and practices in its dealings with Ronald Creech and Edgemont Church on January 18, 1961.”



The 108<sup>th</sup> annual session of the Conference, held at Tee's Chapel Church, Johnston County, on November 1, 2, 1962, was more peaceful because the North Carolina Convention had separated from the National Association. Those conferences that supported the action of the Western Conference, in a special session on January 18, 1961 regarding the J. G. Teasley Faction as the true congregation of Edgemont Church, were persuaded that the proper action had been taken. A lengthy motion stating the position of the Cape Fear Conference on this matter was made and passed on the afternoon of the first day. In the report of the Executive Board, a motion was carried stating that due to the action taken by the following churches: Garner, Prospect, Raleigh, Community Chapel, and Bethel Church (Lenoir County) in joining the newly organized conference, "We the Executive Board of the Cape Fear Conference declare them out of fellowship with this conference until such time as they may later make request for readmission into the Cape Fear Conference and agree to the faith and practices of Free Will Baptists of North Carolina, and that this statement be published in the *Free Will Baptist* paper and a notice be sent to the clerk of each church involved." At another meeting of the Executive Board the following motion was carried: "Whereas the following ministers: C. H. Coates, Lonnie Cayton, Thurman Hall, Herman Hersey, Fred Hersey, Eugene Waddell, and Carey Watkins are members of churches not in good standing with the Cape Fear Conference, be it resolved that we declare them out of fellowship with this conference, and that this be published in the *Free Will Baptist* paper." In another motion Rev. L. R. Ennis was declared to be out of fellowship with this Conference since he was no longer a member of a church in the Conference. The Resolutions Committee submitted four resolutions that related to the recent controversy, denying any obligation to observe the form of church government of the National Association and placing the Cape Fear Conference in full support of the Western Conference and other conferences that adhered to the customs, usages, and practices of North Carolina Free Will Baptists.

### **The Era Following the Split with the National Association**

As part of a report from Mount Olive College, an announcement was made that a non-credit program called the Paul Palmer Institute for Christian Workers would be





offered on campus or at off-campus locations. It was designed for those who could not take advantage of the regular college curriculum for students preparing for the ministry or for laymen who wanted to increase their knowledge and sharpen their skills for work in the local church.

At the annual session of the Conference in 1963, held at Oak Grove Church in Sampson County on October 31 and November 1, the usual reports of the boards and committees of the Conference were presented, along with the reports of enterprises of the State Convention. There was no indication of lasting effects of the controversy that had unsettled the churches of the Conference and the Convention over the last few years.

In the 1964 session of the Conference, held with Shady Grove Church in Sampson County, the report of the Board of Education included a motion that was made and carried to purchase one hundred books for the library at Mount Olive College at a cost of \$5 per book. The entire cost would be five hundred (\$500) dollars. This was an effort to increase the library holdings at a time when the College was looking toward the development of a new campus. In the report of the College, it was announced that a one million dollar development program on the new campus was now underway. Contracts totaling \$815,000 have been awarded for an academic building designed to accommodate 350 students and a three-unit dormitory complex with rooming facilities for 132 students. This was the second year of the annual county benefit dinners in support of the College.

On the second day of this session, a motion was made that the recommendation from the State Convention which read, "That the State Convention of Churches...recommend to its four member conferences and associations that two years of college (sixty-four semester hours or its equivalent) be required of all candidates under thirty-five years of age that come before them for ordination" be made the official position of this Conference. The motion was lost by a vote of 19 to 14. Evidently not everyone voted who was registered at the Conference. The gap between those who believed in preparation for the ministry and those who did not share that belief had not been overcome. This despite a resolution passed in 1963 and included in the minutes of the 1964 session which reads:

Realizing the ministry is more competitive than ever before, that today's ministry includes much more than preaching and visiting, that our churches are requiring better prepared ministers, and that to be unprepared



is to seriously curtail one's ministry, thereby weakening the whole church; Be it resolved: 1. That we commend our ordaining council for participating in a statewide meeting of conference ordaining councils to work toward standard procedure throughout the state for ordaining ministers. 2. That we the Cape Fear Conference of OFWB go on record as giving our hearty support to this statewide movement and urge them to come forth with recommendations as soon as possible.

### **The Growth of Free Will Baptist Ministries**

On the first day of the 1965 session of the Conference, held at Johnston Union Church on the first day and at Goldsboro on the second day, the moderator, Rev. M. E. Godwin, extended the usual hand of fellowship to the pastor and delegates of the Fayetteville Church and received them into the full fellowship of the Conference. The morning worship on the second day was opened with the Ordaining Council in charge of the service. William Taylor Hill was ordained into the ministry. Rev. Walter Reynolds delivered the message and Rev. James A. Evans gave the charge. The Bible was presented by Rev. Fred Powers on behalf of the Board of Education. The ordination prayer was offered by Rev. C. M. Coates. As one item in its report the Ordaining Council recommended that all candidates for ordination be ordained at the worship service on the second day of the Conference except in cases of emergency. The Council also recommended that all ministers not members of the Cape Fear Conference be cleared for pastoral work in this Conference by the Ordaining Council before pastoring churches in our Conference. The report of the Board of Education included this item: "The Board of Education of the Cape Fear Conference met on May 20, 1965 at the home of Dr. W. B. Raper in Mount Olive. We visited the new college campus and saw the progress that was being made there. The Board members discussed ways in which our churches might be helped by Mount Olive College." The Board approved a motion to donate \$200 for a ministerial scholarship with preference to be given to a qualified student from the Cape Fear Conference and another motion to donate \$200 to the Historical Collection at Mount Olive College. In the fall semester of 1965 new facilities on the new campus were occupied for the first time.



In the report of the Cape Fear Missions Board, presented at the 1966 annual session of the Conference, this item was stated: "On July 1, 1966 the Missions Board organized a group of people into a mission. This mission is near Four Oaks, NC and has been named Faith Free Will Baptist Mission." That mission was organized into a church on April 27, 1967 by the Executive Committee of the Conference. In their report at the 1967 session, a motion was made that the Faith Free Will Baptist Church be accepted into the Cape Fear Conference and that the right hand of fellowship be extended to the church. The report of Mount Olive College that same year indicated that construction of the new library was underway with completion scheduled for July 1968.

At the 1968 annual session of the Conference, the report of the Children's Home revealed that 93 children were in the care of the Home, plus 5 high school graduates who were enrolled in the higher educational aid program. In the report of the State Convention Mission Board, it was stated that a great deal of progress was being made in the work in Mexico. Also, it was reported that, in the month of December, Rev. and Mrs. Joe Barrow would be sent to the country of Rhodesia and that Rev. and Mrs. Harold Jones were enrolled at Columbia Bible College were making preparations to go to the mission field. The report of Mount Olive College stated that, in the fall semester of 1968, there were 358 students enrolled. It was reported also that the new library, named in memory of Rev. J. C. Moyer and in honor of Mrs. Moyer, was now in use. This facility, which contains 17,000 volumes, is a valuable asset to the educational program of the College. (This report of Mount Olive College was given by Mr. Gary Barefoot, Librarian at the College.) The report of the Ordaining Council stated, among other things, that Brother Harold Mac Wallace and Brother Emmett W. Bartlett were ordained during the morning worship hour at the Cape Fear Union Meeting. Other men who were ordained that year at another union meeting were William Earl Littleton, Charles W. Pittman, Elijah Floyd Smith, and William Jasper Tyner. The Ordaining Council's report was lengthy, indicating a busy season. For the second time in the last five years the Conference voted down by a small margin the proposal that two years of college be required of all candidates for ordination under thirty-five years of age. The report of the Resolutions Committee included a provision in keeping with a resolution adopted by the State Convention that the Cape Fear Conference designate July 1 – June 30 as the official



church year for the Conference. The Obituary Committee recommended "That this, the 114<sup>th</sup> annual session of the Cape Fear Conference be dedicated to the memory of the late Fred S. Powers and that this be indicated in the printed minutes, along with his picture." Rev. Powers was the pastor of Hopewell Church and moderator of the Conference at the time of his death.

At the 1969 session of the Conference, the report of the State Convention Mission Board revealed that Rev. and Mrs. Harold Jones were on their way to the Philippines and would arrive in Manila on October 30. The Free Will Baptist Institute reported enjoying a remarkable success on the border of Mexico and Texas. Rev. J. E. Timmons remarked that this is the best program that we have worked on in the country of Mexico. In the Children's Home report, it was announced that a new sponsorship program would begin on January 1, 1970, allowing auxiliaries and individuals to choose from a list of items what they want to do for a child they are sponsoring.

At the 1970 session, held at Mount Olive College on October 29 and 30, in the report of the Ordaining Council, it was stated that on May 3, 1970, Brother Terry R. Woodard was ordained at the Faith Church, and on August 5, 1970, the Council met at Palmer Memorial Church and ordained Brothers Larry W. Barbour and James F. Johnson. In the report of the State Convention Mission Board, the Conference was informed that Rev. and Mrs. Joe Barrow were in Biriiri, Rhodesia, but in December plans were for them to move to Chiredzi, Rhodesia where Joe would be in full-time evangelism. In the Philippines, Harold Jones was reported to have been engaged with General Baptist missionaries providing instruction at a Bible College and his wife Sandra was reported to have been teaching Bible in a public school in Davao City. The Obituary Committee reported the deaths of two Cape Fear ministers, Rev. W. H. Lancaster, whose ministry lasted fifty years, and Rev. Albert T. Coates, whose ministry of twenty years ended with his death. The Committee recommended that the minutes of this session of the Conference be dedicated to the memory of these two men and that their pictures be placed in the minutes.

The 1971 session was held at Lee's Chapel Church on November 4, 5. In the report of Mount Olive College, attention was called to distinctive features, including:





1. *Education for Ministers.* Under a “Supervised Work Experience” each ministerial student is afforded the opportunity to work under an experienced pastor or in a denominational enterprise as a part of his educational preparation.
2. *Church-College Scholarship.* This program is a creative approach toward encouraging more Free Will Baptist students to attend the College. If a local church will provide its students a scholarship in the amount of \$250 annually, the college will give the students an equal amount for a total grant of \$500 per student annually under this program. Other financial aid is available if needed.

In the report of the State Convention Mission Board that year, it was reported that Rev. and Mrs. Joe Barrow were in their third year in Rhodesia, that Rev. and Mrs. J. E. Timmons were reporting great success and interest in the work in Mexico, where they were striving to build up the school facilities and to encourage the eight pastors on the field. Rev. and Mrs. Harold Jones were reported to be in language school in Manila. In the report of the Cape Fear Mission Board, it was reported that on January 30 the Board met and decided to disburse \$600 from the mission funds, \$300 to Palmer Memorial, and \$300 to Christian Chapel Mission. The Obituary Committee reported the passing of the dearly beloved minister and brother in Christ, Rev. L. J. Carlyle of Route 3, LaGrange, who was an ordained minister in the Cape Fear Conference for some forty years and served many churches in the denomination. The committee recommended that the minutes of this session be dedicated to the memory of Brother Carlyle and that his picture be placed in the minutes of this Conference.

In the minutes of the 1972 session of the Conference, the Ordaining Council recommended “That high school education be a requirement for those under 35 years of age who wish to be licensed or ordained; and strongly recommends that those under 35 years of age acquire at least sixty-four (64) semester hours of college training or the equivalent thereof.” In the report of the Convention’s Superannuation Board it was suggested that,

You can assist your pastor in preparing for retirement by honoring the request of the State Convention that our churches assist their pastors in preparing for retirement through the Superannuation program as follows:  
*Minimum Assistance* (1) A full-time church pay \$50 per year on pastor’s retirement. (2) A part-time church pay \$75 per year on pastor’s retirement. Note: This minimum assistance should either be increased by the church, or matched by the ministers.



In the report of Mount Olive College it is stated that “Final architectural drawings are now being prepared for the construction of a distinctive chapel on the new campus during 1973. A special gift of \$60,000 has been made but an additional \$100,000 is needed.”

The Cape Fear Board of Education urged all churches of the Conference to notify seniors of the \$200 scholarship awarded annually to a worthy student and those interested should contact the Board by March of each year.

The 1973 session of the Conference was held at Eastwood Church in Fayetteville on November 1 and 2. The report of the Church Finance Association stated that loans made as of August 21, 1973 for that year were \$118,761.28—a record year. Another first this year was the passing of the one million mark in loans since April 20, 1940. Total loans then stood at \$1,072,759. In the report of the State Convention Mission Board, the Conference was informed that Rev. and Mrs. Harold Jones were home on furlough from the Philippines and were in process of visiting and sharing the work in the Philippines with the people. The FWB Press Foundation reported that it was celebrating one hundred years of service, saying, “Looking back over the past we hope that you realize what the FWB Press has meant to our church.” In celebration of this one hundredth anniversary the Press was offering a year’s subscription to *The Free Will Baptist* for \$2, plus tax.

At the 1974 session of the Conference, Rev. Walter Reynolds, representing the Press, offered a resolution that would provide for the publication of an annual yearbook which would include the minutes of the Convention and the minutes of all the conferences and associations in one volume, along with a calendar of denominational activities. In the report of the Foreign Mission Board, it was noted that Rev. and Mrs. Wayne King were preparing to join the Harold Jones family in the work in the Philippines and that Rev. Harold Jones was in the process of planning for the beginning of a Bible Institute for the work in the Philippines. In the report of the Executive Committee, it was stated that the Christian Chapel Church was received into the Conference with the right hand of fellowship extended to all members of the church. The report of the Ordaining Council indicated that these brethren were examined by the council, had passed the examination, and had been ordained: Lloyd Felton Hargis, Alton



Howard, John Daniel Gilliland, and James Franklin Grubbs. Also, Charles L. Johnson and Paul Charles Grubbs had passed their examinations and were to be ordained when they were called to a church. For the first time, there was a report from the Convention's Home Mission and Church Extension Department, which had been separated from the Convention's Mission Board. The report of the Obituary Committee called attention to the death of Rev. Herman Grubbs, pastor of Tee's Chapel Church, expressed appreciation for his years of faithful service, and recommended that the minutes of this session be dedicated to his memory and that his picture be placed in the minutes.

Beginning with 1975, the minutes of the conferences belonging to the State Convention were printed in an annual yearbook, published at the Free Will Baptist Press. At this session of the Cape Fear Conference, an explanation of new registration procedures that were adopted at a previous meeting, which require a badge designating ministers, delegates, and visitors was included in the minutes. The vote on a resolution from the State Convention on the matter of requirements for licensing and ordaining ministers was so close that the moderator had to cast a vote in order to adopt the resolution. The final credentials committee report showed that there were 60 ministers, 8 visiting ministers, 57 delegates, and 42 visitors present at this session. The Conference mission board reported that it had voted to send 85 percent of contributions received to the State home mission program, due to the lack of funds there. In the minutes, there is an obituary and a picture of Rev. R. H. Jackson, who had rendered distinguished service to the Conference and to the Convention.

At the 1976 session, a motion was passed for the Conference to meet for one day only rather than two days. The State Convention president Robert May reported plans for the 250th Anniversary of Free Will Baptists in North Carolina, to be celebrated in 1977. (The first church was settled in Chowan County by Paul Palmer in 1727.) President May also presented a proposal for an executive secretary and a headquarters for the Convention. A special love offering was received for retired minister Rev. Herman Wooten.

In 1977, Paul Grubbs was listed as a newly ordained minister of the Conference from Tee's Chapel Church. The Conference Mission Board reported that no mission work had been done in the Conference during the past year. Out of 46 ministers in the



Conference, only 22 ministers had participated in the Ministers' Conference meetings during the past year with an average attendance of about 14. The Ministers Conference requested that the Conference moderator appoint a committee to study the by-laws governing the Mission Board. A resolution was passed to include women as members of the various committees of the Conference. Another resolution was passed strongly affirming our stand against the Pentecostal and Charismatic movement and our intention not to allow any church or minister to be associated with these movements. The resolution referred to similar statements made in 1912 and in 1962.

At the session in 1978, a question was raised concerning the Conference boundaries in financing missions. David C. Hansley, Convention President, stated that to his knowledge there are no recorded boundaries available. The Executive Committee of the Conference reported increasing the treasurer's bond to \$10,000. The Mission Board reported bringing Haymount Mission under the watchcare of the Conference until it could become a church. The first resolution offered by the Resolutions Committee stated that the teaching and practice of speaking in tongues is not, nor has it ever been, the teaching and practice of the Original Free Will Baptist Church. The Constitution policy on amendments was altered so that motions to amend would lie on the table from the morning session until the afternoon session rather than overnight. This change was necessary due to the Conference adopting the policy of meeting only one day.

In 1979, a motion was passed to support the exploration of reorganizing the Rockfish Conference. (It seems that some missions and churches in the Cape Fear Conference were within the bounds of the old Rockfish Conference.) The Eastover Mission was accepted under the watchcare of the Conference as a mission.

In 1980, the Conference treasurer (Mr. Hinson) noted that funds were available to make educational loans to students at 1 percent interest while in school and 6 percent after graduation. A letter from Christian Chapel, announcing their withdrawal from the Conference, was reported to have been read at a meeting of the Executive Committee. The Constitution of the Conference is printed in the *Yearbook* on page 351.

In 1981, local church dues to the Conference were increased to \$25 per 100 members or major fraction thereof. Victory Mission was recognized as a church and admitted to the Conference. Special permission was requested and granted to ordain Dean





Kennedy as a minister with the Home Mission Board rather than with a church. (Haymount was still a mission at that time and the ordaining policy required that a minister be called to a church in order to be ordained.) The minutes of this session include obituaries and pictures of Revs. Herman Wooten, J. Walter Stanley, and J. E. Timmons.

At the 1982 session, a motion was passed to ratify the new *Articles of Faith and Principles of Church Government (of the General Baptist Heritage)*.

In 1983, The Haymount Mission was recognized as a church and received into the Conference. An effort by the Mission Board to purchase land for a church plant at the intersection of I-95 and US 13 fell through because the State Mission Board said it could not participate at that time and the application for a loan with the Church Finance Association was not approved. The Mission Board purchased a mobile home to be used on sites of mission churches until a building could be built, after which it would be moved to a new location. The Board reported that a work on this model was taking place in Princeton. The minutes of this session included an obituary and picture of Rev. Taylor Hill.

In the 1984 session, a motion was made and carried to suggest that the State Home Mission Board meet with conference mission boards to consider guidelines for establishing and promoting new churches. Another motion was made and carried to ask all churches to receive a monthly love offering for Conference mission work. The Executive Committee reported some exploration into the possibility of forming a new conference for the old Rockfish churches and some churches in other states which had expressed interest in a new conference. It was resolved "that a minister attend two annual Conferences in succession and at least two Union Meetings per year or report to the Conference Ordaining Council and explain his absence. Otherwise his name will be removed from the roll of ordained ministers of the Conference and Union Meeting." The following resolution was rejected by the resolutions committee but was presented from the floor and passed: "Be it resolved that the Cape Fear Conference go on record as standing against the sin of homosexual acts, as stated in Romans 1:17-32, among our ministers, church leaders and church members."



At the 1985 session, the Conference Mission Board was dissolved and all funds were turned over to the State Mission Board. There was a brief obituary for Rev. William Otis Lassiter.

In 1986, the Hickory Grove Church from the Piedmont Conference petitioned to transfer into the Cape Fear Conference. The Temperance Committee, chaired by Rev. Alan Lamm, gave a report on the definition of temperance and the history of the movement. It stressed that to be followers of Christ we should develop temperance in all aspects of life, not just with regard to alcohol.

In the 1987 session there were no actions or decisions of any particularly noteworthy nature.

In 1988, the Ordaining Council reported on a trial of a minister who had been charged by the magistrate with possession of taxed and non-taxed alcohol with intent to sell. The minister refused to surrender his credentials on the grounds that the charges were dropped. A subsequent trial was scheduled by the Council so that the minister could face his accusers. In 1989, the second trial was conducted and reported on and all charges were proven to be false. The case was therefore closed. Also, in 1989, a resolution was passed that all OFWB members strive to participate in the meetings of the Conference because participation and attendance have been falling off.

### **The Close of the Twentieth Century**

In the 1990 session, the Executive Committee reported voting to have the Conference Constitution and By-laws published in the *Yearbook* every four years instead of every year. They also reported voting to have all ordained ministers not regularly attending a FWB church to report to the Ordaining Council. The Executive Committee reported receiving New Freedom Church under the watchcare of the Conference as a new church for a period of one year. A resolution was passed that a letter be written to President Bush (Number 41), asking him to seek a peaceful resolution to the problems in the Middle East.

In 1991, changes in the Constitution and By-laws of the Conference were approved to correct old language referring to conference meetings when they were held



for two days. Willem van der Plas gave a report on the missionary work in the Philippines and the possibility of a new work in Eastern Europe.

In the 1992 session, a resolution was made and passed that the work and reports of the Temperance Committee be combined with the reports of the Resolutions Committee from that point forward.

In 1993, a constitutional amendment was approved to change the date of the annual session to the first Thursday in November. The Executive Committee reported voting to have the Conference Constitution and By-laws distributed at the Conference meeting rather than published in the *Yearbook* due to the high cost of including it in the *Yearbook*.

In 1994, it was decided that because the student loan fund had been inactive for some time, this fund was to be combined with the funds for the Christian Education Committee.

In 1995, the moderator of the Conference made his remarks, including this statement: "...until our churches get right with God, our churches will not grow....If we have fellowship with the Master, then we can have fellowship with one another."

At the 1996 session, a motion was made to change the Constitution so as to have the annual conference meeting on the second Tuesday in November because the previous date was in conflict with another conference meeting time.

At the 1997 session, this statement was included in the minutes:

After much research by Brother Al Markuson, the following report was given: The Sunday School Convention of the Cape Fear Conference had its beginning around 1893. It has existed until this day. After further investigation our constitution says that the Sunday School Convention is under the Board of Education. We do not know when it became separate from the Board of Education. As noted, we had voted on the motion made under the executive report, so the Sunday School Convention is under the Board of Education once again.

A motion was made and passed that all churches submit their church histories to the Conference so they might be compiled and distributed in the year 2000. Mr. H. T. Hinson of Lee's Chapel was recognized for 54 years of service as the treasurer of the Conference.



In 1998, the Board of Education reported taking on the Sunday School Convention and a decision to change their name to the Board of Christian Education. A copy of new by-laws was presented in the *Yearbook*.

### **The Establishment of a Mission Church for the Deaf**

In 1999, Haymount Church began a new mission work for the deaf called “Blended Fellowship.” Constitutional changes were approved regarding the representation ratios for delegates, the documents to be presented from each church, and an increase in per capita dues.

At the year 2000 session, it was reported that Blended Fellowship was formally organized into a mission in July of 2000. The Executive Committee reported on discussions with OFWB Home Missions concerning the process for mission churches and the question of whether a “mother church” provision was possible. No such provision was found, so other avenues had been pursued for Blended Fellowship. It was decided that the Conference Executive Board would serve as the Mission Board as is stated in the Articles of Faith and Principles of Church Government. A report was made on the facilities and the work of Blended Fellowship.

In 2001, the Conference voted to drop the requirement that a candidate for the ministry must be called by a church before they can be ordained. In another vote, the Conference pledged to support Blended Fellowship for the next three years so that they could qualify for a loan. To help resolve the matter of selling the old Genesis (mission) property, there was a report outlining the issues involving Home Missions and the Conference Executive Committee. The proceeds were reported to have been going to Covenant Mission. There was another report on the purchase of a filing cabinet to be kept at the Smithfield Church to keep Conference minutes and other documents. The Conference Executive Board reported working with members of Riverside Church to help manage their affairs as they try to overcome circumstances that threaten to destroy the church. A report was approved giving Blended Fellowship permission to purchase property with the endorsement of the Conference. A constitutional change was made to add a member at large to the officers of the Conference and to set up a rotating system for the ongoing future replacement of officers.





In 2002, a report was made on the plans and finances of Blended Fellowship. Several churches had made pledges of ongoing support to this mission.

In 2003, the Executive Committee reported continued work to advance the Blended Fellowship Mission. In a separate action, they agreed to act as a co-owner of the property used by Covenant Mission.

At the 2004 session, Rev. Otis Hamm presented an account of the “Heritage and History of the Cape Fear Conference” in observance of its 150th Anniversary. The Ordaining Council reported removing a statement from its policies that allows candidates for the ministry who are 35 years old or older to receive a waiver of the requirement to complete two years of college course work.

In 2005, there were no actions taken of particular historical significance.

### **The Ordination of Women**

At the 2006 meeting of the Conference, much work was reported by the Executive Committee in reference to Home Missions’ helping Daly’s Chapel, a struggling church which had recently petitioned to join the Conference. Also, the Executive Committee and the Ordaining Council reported dealing at length with the licensure of a female candidate for the ministry. A letter from the former moderator (not present), establishing his resignation and the surrendering of his credentials, was presented to the Conference by the new moderator. The Executive Committee reported its decision to not read the full report of the Executive Committee in the future Conference sessions. However, the report would be provided in written form for everyone to read. There was some parliamentary wrangling at this session to sustain the Ordaining Council’s decision to license a female candidate, resulting in the resignation of a member of the ordaining council during the business session.

In 2007, the Executive Committee reported their concern and their efforts to maintain unity in the wake of the formation of a new organization called the Fellowship of Conservative Free Will Baptists. The committee also reported on continuing efforts to help restore Daly’s Chapel Church. The Executive Committee reported receiving a petition appealing to the committee to limit ordination to male candidates, which the committee reported to having ruled out of order. It was also reported that initial



discussions had taken place on the matter of whether to ever move Blended Fellowship to regular church status.

At the 2008 session, a constitutional change was made to establish quarterly Conference Fellowship Meetings to take the place of the Union Meetings. A resolution was adopted to appoint a task force to research the feasibility of establishing Blended Fellowship as a ministry of the Conference. The Executive Committee reported its request to the Nominating Committee that all officers retain their current positions. (This appears to be in response to cohesiveness needed to finish the feasibility study for Blended Fellowship's future status.)

At the 2009 session, Dr. W. Burkette Raper made an appeal to the Cape Fear Conference to appoint a historian to update the history of the Cape Fear Conference as the 400<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of General Baptists was approaching. The Executive Committee reported that licensed minister John Butler and layman Franklin Parsons met with them to discuss the release of the deed from the Cape Fear Conference to Covenant OFWB Church. After a review of the budget, accounts, and reports from Covenant, licensed minister John Butler requested that the Conference be left on the deed indefinitely as a co-owner of the property the church was using. The request was granted. The Executive Committee reported that a motion was made by Otis Hamm and carried to borrow \$75,000 from the Church Finance Association to repair the roof of the building at Blended Fellowship. The Executive Committee also reported a recommendation to the Conference that all the officers whose terms expire in 2009 retain their positions with new terms expiring according to the Constitution. A letter will be sent to the chairperson of the Nominating Committee, listing each name and the position they hold. (This appears to be in response to the cohesiveness needed to finish the feasibility study for Blended Fellowship's future status.) A resolution was passed to appoint a historical committee to complete and update the history of the Cape Fear Conference up to the year 2011.

In 2010, the Broken Wing Fellowship Church and the delegation from the church were recognized as a newly organized OFWB Church. The Executive Committee reported the appointment of a committee to establish a five year plan to grow our Conference. This action was in response to a motion that was approved at the 155<sup>th</sup>



Annual Session of the Conference. The Ordaining Council recommended the voluntary participation of all ministers in the Continuing Education Program that was proposed by the Commission on Education for Christian Ministries of the Convention of OFWBs. The Council also recommended the completion of one CEU (continuing education unit) annually. The Ordaining Board reported that they had voted to strongly encourage all future licensed ministry candidates to seek a four year degree or program of study. The Ordaining Council also reported the licensing and ordaining of a female candidate, Carla Williamson, as a minister in the Cape Fear Conference.



## **Section 2**

### **A Collection of Church Histories**





**\*\* Bethel Free Will Baptist Church**

3168 NC Highway 96  
Four Oaks, NC 27524

Bethel Free Will Baptist Church's organization date is not known for certain, but oral history maintains it was established circa 1870. Bethel appears on the roll of the Cape Fear Conference in 1886 with the Reverend John Moore as pastor.

The site of the current location was purchased in 1910 and a new church building was constructed on the site. Over the next several years, new additions were made such as wings which were constructed in 1934; a parsonage was completed in 1948. Also in 1948, three Sunday school classrooms were added, and in 1951 a new education department was built. In 1964, an entire new auditorium was built; and in 1978 a fellowship hall and kitchen were added as well.

\*\* The editorial committee preparing this history had limited access to any written history of the church nor did the church furnish any information when contacted. Therefore, this brief account was prepared from what basic information that could be found.



## **\*\* Blended Fellowship**

2091 Big Daddy's Road  
Pikeville, NC 27863

Blended Fellowship was established as a mission of Haymount Original Free Will Baptist Church in 1999. In 2001, the Cape Fear Conference agreed to help the mission financially for the next three years.

\*\* The editorial committee preparing this history did not have access to any written history of the church nor did the church furnish any information when contacted. Therefore, this brief account was prepared from basic information found in the Cape Fear Conference minutes.



**\*\* Broken Wing FWB Church**

(No available address)

Broken Wing was accepted as an Original Free Will Baptist church in the Cape Fear Conference in 2010.

\*\* The editorial committee preparing this history did not have access to any written history of the church nor did the church furnish any information when contacted. Therefore, this brief account was prepared from basic information found in the Cape Fear Conference minutes.



## **Casey's Chapel Church**

4913 U.S. Highway 70 East  
Goldsboro, NC 27534

Casey's Chapel Church was organized in 1874 as a branch from Wood's Grove Free Will Baptist Church. Led by the Lord, Rev. J.F. Hill and Mr. Alex Casey spearheaded the effort. Hill was a well known pastor who began preaching at the age of 25 and served the Lord as a minister for 45 years. He was Casey's Chapel's first pastor and served that congregation for 37 years. Alex Casey was a layman who donated a plot of land upon which Casey's Chapel was built. He served as senior deacon and Bible class teacher and played a significant role in working with Rev. Hill.

The first name of the church was Friendship, and the church building doubled as a church and a school. In 1881, Friendship was admitted into the Cape Fear Conference. The church reported 14 members. By 1891, membership in both the church and school had grown to the point that a new, larger building was needed, and that task was soon accomplished. In 1893, the church changed its name from Friendship to Casey's Chapel. The church then reported 80 members.

The next years saw continued growth at Casey's Chapel. On November 9-10, 1894, Casey's Chapel hosted the 40<sup>th</sup> annual session of the Cape Fear Conference. In 1898, the church helped to start a new branch, St. John's Free Will Baptist Church, that was finally well established enough to be received into the Cape Fear Conference in 1910.

In 1918, the present church sanctuary was built under the leadership of Rev. J. Frank Casey. The sanctuary was used for both church services and Sunday school until 1947 when four new Sunday school classrooms were added. By 1951, Casey's Chapel was ready to move from quarter time to half time services. The church continued to grow, and by 1962, a new educational building was completed. Later, other additions were made, such as a baptistery in 1969, brick veneer in 1970, a narthex at the front of the church, and new stained glass windows.





By 1971, under the leadership of Rev. Ed Miles, the church felt confident enough to move from a half time to full time worship. After that, other pastors followed, such as Bryant Hines, Clyde Cox and Alan Lamm. Under the leadership of Pastor Lamm, a church steeple and a carport were added.



**\*\* Covenant FWB Church**

813 Orchard Street  
Hope Mills, NC 28348

Covenant first appears in the *Free Will Baptist Yearbook* in 1997 as Covenant of the Deaf, an Original Free Will Baptist Mission. The *2001 Yearbook*, listed Covenant Free Will Baptist Mission. By 2002, it had become Covenant Free Will Baptist Church with 83 members.

\*\* The editorial committee preparing this history did not have access to any written history of the church nor did the church furnish information when contacted. Therefore, this brief account was prepared from basic information found in the Cape Fear Conference minutes.



## **Daly's Chapel Free Will Baptist Church**

4652 Paul's Path Road  
LaGrange, NC 28551

Daly's Chapel was established in 1883 when people felt called by the Lord to worship at the local "Byrd School House." That same year, R.L. and Heby Rollins deeded a tract of land to the ruling elders of the gathering; once a meeting house was completed on the land, the congregation chose the name Daly's Chapel after the local Daly family who had done much to start the congregation. By 1910, the church had grown to the point that a larger worship house was needed and was soon completed.

Elder A.E. Rouse (1858-1936) was one of the earliest pastors of Daly's Chapel and left a lasting impression. Rouse was a friend of the Free Will Baptist Children's Home in Middlesex as well as Ayden Seminary. Several young men were also called into the ministry under his leadership to include J.W. Alford and Lloyd Vernon. Rouse pastored Daly's Chapel for around 40 years.

The church continued to grow numerically, and in 1948, four new Sunday school rooms were added. Still, more room was needed and plans were drawn up in late 1955 to build a larger building. By 1961, the first services were held at the new facility under Pastor Ronnie Taylor. The new building included a sanctuary, baptismal pool, Sunday school rooms, library and two restrooms.



## **Faith Free Will Baptist Church**

1758 Hockaday Road  
Four Oaks, NC 27534

Faith Free Will Baptist Church was established in May 1966 after several members of Bethel Free Will Baptist decided to leave that church and start one of their own. The Reverend James Walter Stanley was called as the first pastor, and the first worship services were conducted at Massengill's Store. Faith was recognized as a mission in July 1967 by the Cape Fear Conference and placed under the direction of the Conference Mission Board. In April 1968, Faith was formally recognized as a church within the Cape Fear Conference.

Members soon began working on a church building with local members participating at every level. On May 19, 1969, the new church building was dedicated and a cornerstone was placed at the front in honor of Rev. James Walter Stanley, the founder and organizer of Faith.

In 1972 a steeple was added to the church building, and in 1985, under the leadership of Rev. Hubert Stanley, the sanctuary was remodeled. In 1986, a new fellowship hall was added, and the name of Mrs. Mozell Stanley, wife of James Walter Stanley, was added to the cornerstone in honor of her long service to the church. Over the years, additional projects were completed, such as stained glass windows, a new fellowship hall, carpet and more.

Faith has been an active member of the Cape Fear Conference and denomination and has supported all the various denominational ministries.





## **First Free Will Baptist Church-Goldsboro**

604 East Ash Street  
Goldsboro, NC 27530

First Free Will Baptist Church of Goldsboro was established in 1908 under the leadership of the Reverend Frank Casey and lay members Owen Ham, Halsey and Sophie Malpass, Cora Mitchell, Lizzie Taylor, Lon Taylor, Elizabeth Waters and W.H. Waters. The earliest services were held in the "Georgetown" section of Goldsboro in the homes of Mr. Casey and various lay members. The church and its fifteen members were accepted into the Cape Fear Conference on October 28, 1908.

In 1909, land at the corner of Simmons and Leslie streets was acquired for the building of a meetinghouse which was completed in 1910. Twenty-two members now worshipped at the church and Rev. Casey's salary was raised from \$17.45 to \$21.00.

By 1918, the church had grown to 117 members, and the pastor's salary was raised to \$250. A new Sunday school building with six classrooms was added in 1922 and the church organized an orchestra in 1929.

In 1934, a controversy over speaking in tongues arose at the Goldsboro church when a new pastor, Reverend R.S. Askew, assumed the pulpit. Askew began advocating the doctrine of speaking in tongues which caused much debate within the church. Conference officials finally showed up at a tent revival Askew held in 1934 and demanded that he stop preaching the controversial doctrine or else surrender his ordination credentials. Askew and approximately 100 church members then chose to leave the Goldsboro church and established Four Square Gospel Church. Later that same year, many of those decided to return to the Goldsboro church after Askew was arrested and imprisoned for concocting his own kidnapping and ransom demand of \$25,000.

The Goldsboro church soon began to recover, and by 1937, the exterior was bricked. Under the leadership of the Rev. M.L. Johnson, new pews and windows were added, and a parsonage was purchased in 1942 at 713 Simmons Street. In 1945, money was borrowed from the denomination's Church Finance Association to remodel the



parsonage and do other repairs on the church building itself. In 1946 a kindergarten program was started, and in 1950, a Saturday evening radio program was added as well.

Then tragedy struck again when a fire broke out on November 7, 1954 leaving the church building completely destroyed. For a time, services were held at various locations, such as the William Street School and an old Presbyterian Church until a new building was purchased and remodeled in 1956.

In 1960, a new controversy arose when Pastor Frank Davenport asserted that the church property should be in his name. That led to another church division and the membership decreased from 319 members to 230 members. Davenport and his supporters ended up starting a new church known as Faith Free Will Baptist Church, located on Highway 70 West.

Over the next years, the church began to recover under the pastorates of men like C.H. Overman and James Evans. In 1964, two church members, Taylor Hill and John Adcox, both received job transfers to Fayetteville, N.C. Hill announced that he felt a call into the ministry, and he and Adcox started a mission in Fayetteville. That mission was aided by the Goldsboro church which supplied hymnals, church pews, and more. The mission later became known as Eastwood Free Will Baptist Church.

In 1967, Goldsboro's new sanctuary was dedicated at the church's current location. The next year additional land was purchased behind the church to be used as a parking lot. Several ministers served as pastor over the next few years including Reverends Ed Miles, David C. Hansley and Earl Glenn. In 1979, Norman Ard was called as pastor and remained until 2006. During his time at Goldsboro, the church helped to form the United Church Ministries which reaches out to the poor of Wayne County. A new education building and fellowship hall were completed in 1989, and a bell tower was donated in 1992 by the children of Roy and Ola Mae Bailey. The church also actively engaged in supporting foreign missions and helped to build a school in India, and church members volunteered to make short mission trips to Mexico. In 2006, John Hill became the new pastor. Under Hill's leadership, the church worked to purchase a bus, start a prayer room ministry, engaged in the *Pursuing Missional Faithfulness Spiritual Journey*, and more.



## **First Free Will Baptist Church-Smithfield**

529 South Third Street  
P.O. Box 886  
Smithfield, NC 27577

In 1923, members of various Free Will Baptist churches who had moved to Smithfield to seek employment joined together to establish a Free Will Baptist church in their new town. The group met in a furniture store owned by Henry A. Crumpler and decided to rent space to conduct worship services at the Prize tobacco warehouse located on Market Street.

The Reverend Rudolph Faircloth was called as the first pastor and services continued at the warehouse for a year. During that period membership grew to 50, with 75 attending Sunday school. The church also became a member of the Cape Fear Conference under the direction of Rev. S.H. Styron and Rev. Faircloth.

The congregation continued to grow to include 100 members and soon members began to seek a church building of their own. Land was acquired at the corner of South Third and Rose streets, and in 1925, a church building was constructed.

The 1930s was the era of the Great Depression and by 1940 the Smithfield First FWB Church was experiencing its own financial difficulties. Specifically, a loan from the Smithfield Savings and Loan Company became past due. Therefore, the church turned to the State Convention of Original Free Will Baptists for help. That body was prompted into forming the Church Finance Corporation, Inc. in order to help the Smithfield church as well as others in need of loans. The newly established Church Finance Corporation purchased the loan from the loan company and refinanced the loan to the church on more favorable terms. Under the leadership of Rev. W.H. Lancaster, the church was soon able to pay off the debt in full.

Rev. Lancaster served the church until October 1949 when he was replaced by Rev. Earl Glenn. The church now had progressed toward half time worship services with Sunday school held every Sunday.

The post World War II years saw a large increase in church membership across the nation and that was true of the Smithfield church as well. By 1952, the church



adopted a more professional budget, moved to full time services, and began construction of a three bedroom parsonage. Pastor Earl Glenn and family moved into the parsonage in November 1952.

Under the leadership of the new pastor, Rev. Chester Phillips, a new education building was constructed in 1957; and in 1960, the sanctuary was completely remodeled and new furniture was added. By late 1960, however, tensions arose between the State Convention (Convention of Original Free Will Baptists of North Carolina) and the national headquarters (National Association of Free Will Baptists) over issues related to Mount Olive College, the Free Will Baptist Press in Ayden, NC, and church government. The Smithfield First FWB Church was also divided with some supporting the State Convention and others supporting the National Association.

By 1961, the State Convention severed its ties with the National Association and vice-versa. On October 25, 1961, the Smithfield First FWB Church voted to remain with the National Association and end ties with the State Convention. Still, tensions remained within the church, and at a regular business meeting on August 1, 1962, the resignation of Pastor Wayne Smith was called for to begin immediately. The motion passed which resulted in approximately one-half of the church members leaving to establish their own church within the National Association which they named Unity Free Will Baptist Church. On August 8, 1962, those members who remained at the Smithfield First FWB Church voted to rejoin the State Convention of Original Free Will Baptists, and their membership was accepted the next month at the annual State Convention.





## **Haymount Free Will Baptist Church**

136 Eastwood Avenue  
Fayetteville, NC 28301

The origins of Haymount go back to 1976 when Eastwood Original Free Will Baptist Church authorized Reverend Taylor Hill and others to start a mission church. The new mission held its first worship service on May 9, 1976, taking the name Happiness Original Free Will Baptist Mission. Rev. Hill served as pastor.

The Mission purchased a house at 1209 Arsenal Avenue to use for worship services and soon grew to the point that more space was needed. Therefore, additional land was acquired including a house at 209 Broadfoot Avenue. The group also agreed to change the name of the Mission to Haymount Hill in January 1979.

Rev. Hill was a tireless worker but in 1982 was stricken with a brain tumor and was soon no longer able to continue his ministry. At that point, Dean Kennedy began filling in for Rev. Hill and after Mr. Kennedy was ordained he became the head of the Mission with Mr. Hill's resignation on October 24, 1982. Rev. Hill died later that same year in December.

Haymount formally transitioned from mission to church on August 21, 1983. Dean Kennedy continued as pastor to the 43 charter members. In 1984, the church moved to Eastwood Avenue. The church began to grow and in February 1985, a senior citizens ministry was started, headed by Ms. Shirley Adcox. The church was also able to start a new mission work called Genesis Original Free Will Baptist Mission, headed by the Rev. Jesse Caton.

Haymount's continued growth meant that it needed more space. In August 1995, the church bought a house at 204 Eastwood Avenue to serve as a parsonage. In June 1998, a park behind the church building was acquired. In April 1999, a new adjoining house was bought and it was turned into the new parsonage with the previous parsonage being converted to Sunday school classrooms. Haymount was even able to help Doug Seymour and his wife, Melanie, the church's youth leaders, start a deaf ministry at



Haymount. By July 1999, Seymour, who was a licensed minister by that point, started a mission work for the deaf in Goldsboro with Haymount's support.

Hard working pastor Dean Kennedy got some help in 2002 when Clarence Privette of the church became a licensed minister. After his ordination on June 5, 2005, he was named associate pastor. Kennedy soon found himself battling cancer and was forced to step down on January 21, 2010. Privette was named pastor of Haymount at that point.



## **Hopewell Free Will Baptist Church**

5835 Black Creek Road  
Smithfield, NC 27577

The beginnings of Hopewell Church go back to Laurel Chapel Original Free Will Baptist Church, probably before the Civil War. By 1872, Laurel Chapel was represented at the Cape Fear Conference and reported having 39 members. After some membership changes with some departing, the remaining 25 members built a new meetinghouse in 1886, and the new church was named Hopewell by the pastor, Elder Rufus Allen Johnson, who remarked “let us hope it does well.” Former Confederate soldier Jerry Pope was the group’s first deacon and served until his death in 1912.

Elder Johnson died in 1893, and over the next few years several others served as pastors including J.H. Worley, C.H. Tripp, J.F. Hill, J.M. Lee, J.H. Jernigan, J.F. Owens, W.R. Glover, and W.R. Coats. The average pay for pastors was \$25.00 a year.

In those days, the women and children sat on one side of the church, while the men sat on the other. Women took communion from a common cup, while men took communion from their own common cup. Likewise, the women practiced the washing of the saints’ feet on their side of the tiny meeting house, while the men conducted theirs on their side of the building. In 1916, Melissa Thompson, Alice Alford and Betty Johnson were made Deaconesses tasked with the duty of taking care of needy families, the sick and afflicted, and even delivering mail to the homes of those not serviced by the postal service.

In 1916, Rev. H.R. Faircloth was called to pastor Hopewell and served for the next ten years. In 1917, the church made solicitations for *The Free Will Baptist* magazine for the first time. The church also began raising money for the State Convention and Sunday School Convention as well.

In 1922, J. F. Davis and G.W. Massengill were made Ruling Elders; they were mediators at the Quarterly Conference (a.k.a. business meeting). Members who acted inappropriately were excommunicated or expelled from the church.



During the 1920s, the pastor's salary was raised to a little less than \$300 a month and the church was generous in its support of Eureka College, the denomination's school. All that changed, however, during the Great Depression years of the 1930s. As in much of the country, church attendance dropped, as did church offerings.

World War II and its aftermath witnessed the financial recovery of the nation and its churches. Hopewell, too, grew and was able to improve and expand on the church building and even talked of building a parsonage. The church also voted to extend a pastor's call from one to two years and to permit pastors a 90 day notice if either they or the church should desire their termination of duties. Hopewell also saw the calling of many young men to the ministry during this era. In 1955, the church voted to move to full-time services.. In 1957, the church voted to use bulletins in the worship service. And in the 1960s a nursery, library, sound system, air conditioning were added and the kitchen was remodeled.

In 1961-1962, the denomination split as some supported the National Association while others supported the State Convention. This was the second such challenge Hopewell witnessed, the first being the 1911-1912 Cape Fear Conference split over the issue of speaking in tongues. In both cases, Hopewell remained true to both the Cape Fear Conference and the Original Free Will Baptist tradition.

In 1968, Rev. Edmundo Gonzalez was called to serve as pastor and did so until 1996 with one interruption while he attended Princeton Theological Seminary in New Jersey. He was replaced by Rev. Scott Casey who has served from 1997 to the present.





## **Johnston Union**

3575 U.S. 70 Business West  
Clayton, NC 27520

Johnston Union dates the establishment of their church as September 15, 1870, and membership in the Cape Fear Conference just a few weeks later. Mrs. William A. Smith granted land for the church for the small fee of 25 cents. Pastor Rufus Johnston and Deacon N.S. Barnes served as the first leaders. The church remained at its first site until 1889 when it was moved to its present location, about four miles west of Smithfield, NC, on land given by Mr. and Mrs. B.R. Jones. Today, the church does not possess all of the early minutes, but records show that after Pastor Johnston, other pastors followed including James Turnage, J.S. Ellis, Andrew Hodges, C.A. Jackson, Jimmy Owens, and H.H. Goff. Current records date back to 1909 when Rev. Robert Strickland was pastor and the church listed 173 members on the roll, but a 1910 revision reduced that number to 65 active members.

Over the next years, the church continued to grow under the leadership of various pastors such as Dock Johnson, W.R. Glover, W.R. Coates, Frank Casey and H.R. Faircloth. Each man made an impact on the church. In 1920, W.H. Lancaster was ordained from Johnston Union. He would go on to serve as pastor making a significant contribution. Mrs. Lancaster helped the ladies of the church establish a Woman's Auxiliary in 1930 which included ten charter members. It was that same period that a singing group, called the Warrick Quartet, was organized. The group included Lester, Almond, Theresa and Luby Warrick.

In those days, Johnston Union, like most Original Free Will Baptist Churches, had quarter time services, meaning that while Sunday school met each week, church services were conducted only once a month. In 1949, the church moved to half time services meeting twice a month. The church was growing and now listed 203 active members. Two year later, the church building was remodeled with new Sunday school rooms added, new light fixtures installed, and a gas heater replaced the old wood burning stove. Later in 1955, oak pulpit furniture and carpet were added as well. And in 1957, an annex



was built adding six new Sunday school rooms, two restrooms and a baptistery. Brick veneer was also added to the outside of the building.

In 1958, Rev. W.H. Lancaster was forced to retire due to poor health. Soon afterward, he was voted Pastor Emeritus for life to honor him for his faithful service to Johnston Union. Other pastors followed such as C.M. Coates and Frank Davenport. In 1960, Rev. W.A. Hansley was named as the church's first full time pastor. Hansley was the first to move into the parsonage that had just been built. The church continued to grow during this era, and in 1961, had 367 members.

Johnston Union elected to remain with the North Carolina State Convention and not be a part of the National Association during the 1961-1962 schism. Several pastors served the church over the rest of the 1960s including G.C. Joyner, J.W. Everton, Noah Brown, Larry Brown, Larry Coats, and Eddie Edwards. That era also marked significant physical additions such as the purchase of more land, extensive remodeling of the building's interior, a new front porch and steeple addition, and the installation of an air-conditioning and public address system. The Church, which was always known for its music program, now included a 100 member choir as well.

The church made other updates afterward to include remodeling, the addition of a church van, a new sign in front of the church, stained glass windows and a playground for children. New pastors served as well including Al Warrick, Jr., Stephen Prescott and Tim Heath. Warrick was a native son of the church, but he was not the only minister to be called from Johnston Union in recent years. Others include Bobby Jones, Harold Mac Wallace and Earl Johnson. By 2011, the church's annual budget had grown to \$98,850.00 per year, and Johnston Union could boast that it was debt free.



## **Lanwood Chapel**

473 Johnson Road  
Kenly, NC 27542

Lanwood Chapel Church was organized the second Sunday night in October 1949 by Rev. W.H. Lancaster of Smithfield, NC and Rev. Robert Woodard of Durham County. After a ten day revival held in a tent located on the farm of Horace Lancaster, Pastors Lancaster and Woodard were so pleased with the progress made during the revival that they suggested a church be organized. Mrs. Roscoe Kirks of Buffalo Road, Smithfield, NC, gave the land on which the church was built. All of the men in the neighborhood of Buffalo Road donated timber and materials for the church.

Four months later, the church building was complete and ready for services to begin. The members decided to name the new church Lanwood Chapel, after Lancaster and Woodard. Rev. Lancaster was named the first pastor, and the first dinner was given there on Monday, April 24, 1950, in honor of the two Free Will Baptist ministers.

Rev. Lancaster resigned after four months in order for his son-in-law, Cleron M. Coats of Benson, NC, to be ordained and made the church's new pastor.



## **Lee's Chapel**

4948 Plain View Highway  
Dunn, NC 28334

Lee's Chapel was organized on September 15, 1892 after a revival held by The Reverend Lunda Lee in the "old" Plain View School (then located on Core Road). Lee lived and worked as a farmer and preacher in the Plain View community of northern Sampson County where Lee's Chapel is today. As an experience minister, he guided the congregation of through the process of quickly meeting the requirements necessary to be received into the Cape Fear Conference, which met just five weeks later on October 21, 1892.

The members of the new church immediately set out to build a building on land donated by L.M.K. Tew. The simple rectangular wood-frame structure was built on the site of the present day building. Wings were added to the building for Sunday school rooms in the 1920s and a new fellowship hall and still more Sunday School rooms were added in 1956. The exterior of the church building was bricked circa 1956, and a steeple and porch were also added. That original structure, built in 1892, still stands today, though it has been greatly altered in appearance.

A progressive attitude was apparent early on. By the May 13, 1894 business meeting, the membership roll had increased from the initial forty-five members to ninety members. At the Cape Fear Conference meeting in 1893, The Reverend Lunda Lee introduced the resolution establishing a Sabbath School Convention in the conference. Another motion established that Free Will Baptist literature would be used by the Sabbath Schools. This has been accepted as the earliest date of Free Will Baptists establishing Sabbath Schools using Free Will Baptist literature. Lee's Chapel quickly embraced the concept promoted by its pastor and began Sabbath School classes on January 14, 1894. This makes Lee's Chapel the oldest Original Free Will Baptist Sunday School operating today. Like many of our churches in that era, Lee's Chapel had worship services only one Sunday per month. Therefore, it was the weekly Sunday school service that sustained the people.





Ministry groups have always been an important aspect of Lee's Chapel life. On April 8, 1923, the Ladies Aid Society of Lee's Chapel Free Will Baptist Church was organized, later changing its name to the Woman's Auxiliary. By 1924, the group was composed of 33 members. Meetings included devotions, prayers, discussions, lectures, and outreach efforts to locals who were sick or in financial need. The men of the church also have a ministry organization called the Men's Fellowship, which meets monthly for breakfast. Their chief work is providing assistance with building and large-scale cooking projects in the church as well as supporting local and denominational ministries.

In 1964, Lee's Chapel was able to call The Reverend Henry Armstrong as a full time pastor, prompting the members to construct a parsonage (which serves as a Ministry House today). Twenty years later, the sanctuary was expanded in order to accommodate still more people. In recent years, the church has constructed a large bus garage, a drive-under shelter, a youth room, installed quality sound and video equipment, and purchased land adjacent to the church for future expansion.

Currently, Lee's Chapel is responding to contemporary needs by offering inreach ministries to all ages from infants through senior citizens in addition to age appropriate Sunday School and Bible Study classes for all ages. And, the church is reaching out through efforts like a community food pantry, CARE ministry, disaster relief ministry, international shoebox ministry, and a community clothes closet ministry.

After 119 years of service to the community and the kingdom, Lee's Chapel knows the importance of preparing today to meet the needs of the future. For that reason, on October 10, 2010, the church established the Lee's Chapel Church Endowment with the NC Foundation for Christian Ministries to provide a permanent and practical use for gifts made in honor or memory of someone.



## **\*\* Mount Olive FWB Church**

Rodgers Chapel  
Mount Olive College  
Mount Olive, NC 28365

The Mount Olive Church was composed primarily of employees of Mount Olive College. The members attempted to be formally organized as a church in 1959 but were told it did not meet all the requirements at that time. In 1960, the group was finally accepted as a church in the Cape Fear Conference. Several men served as pastor in the early years to include E.C. Morris and later Cedric Pierce.

\*\* The editorial committee preparing this history did not have access to any written history of the church nor did the church furnish any information when contacted. Therefore, this brief account was prepared from basic information found in the Cape Fear Conference minutes.



## **Oak Grove Free Will Baptist Church**

3311 Newton Grove Highway  
Newton Grove, NC 28366

According to a church history written by Mrs. Annie Warren McPhail, a revered member of Oak Grove, a few years before the church was organized, the young people of the community organized a Sunday school and met on Sunday afternoons in the old school house nearby. There was no Free Will Baptist church nearer than Shady Grove. At the request of Mrs. McPhail's parents, Sampson and Kitty Ann Warren, Rev. J. H. Hill was invited to hold a revival in the old school house in August 1897 and about 12-15 converts were baptized by Rev. Hill. With these few members, and some who moved their memberships from Shady Grove and other churches, the church was organized and preparations were made at once to build a church; and Rev. Hill was the first pastor. The church petitioned the Cape Fear Conference for membership at its 1897 meeting held with the Dunn Church on November 4-6 and was admitted to the Conference. The delegates from Oak Grove that year were J. E. Warren, Lovett Warren and E. M. Tart. Land was purchased and apparently the building was completed sometime in late summer 1898. The builder was Henry Carroll Ivey. Other early pastors were J. F. Owens, R. C. Jackson, Lunda Lee, and J. M. Wilson who with Hill served from the founding of the church until 1912.

As membership grew, the need for additional space was apparent, and the first addition was made to the church in the late 1930's when four Sunday school rooms were added. Expansion began again in the 1950's when the educational building was constructed which included more classroom space, a kitchen and restroom facilities. A few years later, the foyer, front porch, steeple, and stained glass windows were added. Other renovations were made in the years following, and in the 1990's, the fellowship hall was enlarged and new siding, roofing and additional air conditioning was installed on the existing facilities.

In addition to the earlier organized Sunday school, other organizations began to develop. The woman's work was organized sometime during 1919 under the supervision



of Rev. L. H. Wetherington, but in the aftermath of WW I, interest waned, and the members decided to stop the Ladies' Aid meetings. However, in the early 1940's, the auxiliary was reorganized by Mrs. Loubelle Godwin, wife of Rev. Minot Godwin. In the 1960's, the auxiliary was named for its oldest member, Mrs. Annie McPhail. The auxiliary continues to be a very active organization in the church, taking part in both local and denominational projects. In 1968 the men of the church were organized as the "Men of Free Will". In 1956, Rev. R. P. Harris created interest in forming the first organized choir, as he was not only the pastor, but a music teacher as well. The choir is still a very important component of the church and thrives under leadership from members of the Ethel Warren family, who are also music teachers and musicians.





## **Palmer Memorial Free Will Baptist Church**

2038 Garner Road  
Garner, NC 27529

On May 1, 1962, thirty six people met at the home of Ralph Beaman in Raleigh, NC, for the purpose of organizing a FWB mission as they had seen a need for a Free Will Baptist church in the Raleigh vicinity. Among those present at the meeting were Reverends R. H. Jackson, Chairman of the NC State Convention of Original Free Will Baptists Mission Board; R. W. Allman, a member of that board; C. M. Coates, Chairman of the Cape Fear FWB Conference Mission Board; and Ed Taylor, Moderator of the Cape Fear Union Meeting and proxy for Rev. C. F. Bowen, Moderator of the Cape Fear Conference. Out of that organizational meeting, the following officers and committees were elected: Trustees – Moses Farmer, Lawrence Garris, and Louis Puckett; Clerk – Mrs. Ralph Beaman; Treasurer – J. D. Strickland; Finance Committee – J. D. Strickland, Albert Woodard and Eddie Taylor. The first deacons were not ordained until October 18, 1964, under the leadership of Rev. Ed Taylor, the first resident pastor who was called in June 1963 after the resignation of Rev. Royster Martin, the first pastor who had been called in August 1962.

At the organizational meeting, the name chosen for the new mission was New Hope. However, on September 5, 1962, the name was changed to Palmer Memorial Mission, in recognition of Paul Palmer, the founder of the Free Will Baptist movement in North Carolina and the South. The mission status existed until May 5, 1968, when it officially became Palmer Memorial Free Will Baptist Church.

After the organization of the mission, services were held in the homes of its members and in the Overby Funeral Home. In October of 1962, services were moved to 500 Garner Loop Road in Garner, NC, to a building rented from Moses Farmer, one of its members. The church grew steadily and a Woman's Auxiliary and youth organizations were organized in September and October of that year.

Property was purchased on September 20, 1967, at 904 Northview Street (outside Raleigh in the Cloverdale subdivision on old highway 70) and a house on the property



was converted into a chapel and seven Sunday school rooms. A house on the adjoining property was purchased in 1969 for a parsonage. Under the leadership of Rev. R. W. Allman, called in January 1970, the church experienced renewed dedication and growth. In December of that year, the building that had been remodeled in 1967 was moved from the corner of the lot to the back of the parsonage property as plans were made for the construction of a new facility (the present church) for which ground was broken in January 1971 and completed and dedicated in July 1971. Under the leadership of the present pastor, Rev. Joe Myrick, the church continues to fill the need that prompted its founding over a half century ago.



## **Pleasant Grove Free Will Baptist Church**

290 Red Hill Church Road  
Dunn, NC 28334

The Cape Fear Conference manuscript minutes of October 7, 1859, state that “On motion [it was] agreed that the church at Pleasant Grove be received into this conference.” Delegates were G. Parker, L. Hall, and A. Fowler. Membership was reported to be fifty one. Only five ministers were listed in the 1859 minutes. Three of these (James Turnage, William Byrd, and B. B. Holder (licentiate)) were from Averasboro in Harnett County. No doubt one of the three was responsible for organizing the church. Allen Fowler later became a minister, so he also might have been instrumental in its founding since he was a delegate to the Cape Fear Conference when the church petitioned for membership. James Turnage was pastor in 1872, the first time that the minutes identified pastors with churches. Membership at that time was 98, and the Sunday school had 38 on roll.

Tradition says that the “Old Field” church, as Pleasant Grove was often referred to, was erected on land which was originally a part of the old Arthur Fowler estate. Further tradition says that the portion on which the church was located was farmland and had not been cultivated for some time and became known as the Fowler old field and hence the church took its name as the Old Field church, later changing it to Pleasant Grove. Thus, the church may have been organized or actually founded a year or more before it joined the Cape Fear Conference, but no records substantiate that speculation. Today the church is thriving and the membership is around 200.



## **Powhatan Free Will Baptist Church**

3468 Powhatan Road  
Clayton, NC 27527

On January 3, 1888, a Free Will Baptist church was founded near what is now known as the Dock Benson farm. The church was named New Chapel and was located on land purchased for \$1.00 from Mr. A. T. Uzzle. Membership was twenty-two. Trustees were W. H. Poole, R. E. Phillips and R. C. Poole. Pastors in the early years were J. C. Ellis, \_\_\_ Stafford, J. R. Wallace, and H. R. Faircloth (who served as pastor at least three different times with one term of twelve years).

As the church grew, new land, located on Powhatan Road in Clayton was given to the church by Mr. M. H. Jones and Mrs. Ella J. Jones on December 4, 1914. The church was moved to this location near the Powhatan School while Faircloth was pastor. In 1922, the congregation began building a new sanctuary which was completed in 1923. Upon its completion and dedication, the church called New Church was renamed Powhatan in honor of an Indian chief who had lived and camped in the community. Later that year (November, 1923 – one source says 1927), additional land was purchased behind the church from Mrs. Ella Jones, Mr. James A. Jones, and Mrs. Hildred Jones to serve as the church cemetery.

The church purchased from the Johnston County Board of Education the Powhatan School property on October 20, 1931. This property was located adjacent to the church property. In 1945, five new Sunday school rooms were added to the rear of the sanctuary and that same year worship services were extended to half-time rather than the quarterly basis they had had for many years. In 1957 another building program added a left wing to the church which consisted of five more Sunday school rooms and a pastor's study. In 1961 a new fellowship hall was built, and in 1963 a parsonage was completed and services were extended to full-time with Rev. Kemery Ard as pastor. The next twenty-five years brought many renovations and additions to the physical structure of the facilities as growth of membership and programs necessitated. The Rev. Roger Hill is the current pastor.





**\*\* Riverside Free Will Baptist Church**

3045 Richardson Bridge Road  
Princeton, NC 27569

According to the Cape Fear Conference manuscript minutes of November 4, 1904, "Petitionary letters were called for and a letter was received from Riverside Church petitioning for admission into the Cape Fear Conference—said church was received." The statistical tables of the minutes show that Riverside had 7 members (4 males and 3 females). Spicy Williford was listed as clerk and D. R. Stafford as pastor. Delegate to the Conference was Joseph Hughes. The Conference minutes of 1905 listed W. H. Martin as a delegate and membership was reported to be 21. Robert Strickland was pastor. There was no report of a Sunday school. Conference minutes list a membership of 31 in 1906 and in the 1907 minutes, J. Ruffin Johnson was listed as pastor. Today the membership is approximately 75.

\*\* The editorial committee preparing this history did not have access to any written history of the church nor did the church furnish any information when contacted. Therefore, this brief account was prepared from basic information found in the Cape Fear Conference minutes.



## **Robert's Grove Free Will Baptist Church**

725 Robert's Grove Road  
Dunn, NC 28334

Minutes of the church at Robert's Grove record the organizational date as September 10, 1896, following "a series of meetings held in Mingo township near Hawley's Store in Sampson County, conducted by Elder R. C. Jackson," the founder and first pastor. Elder Jackson was pastoring Shady Grove, Pleasant Grove and Dunn Free Will Baptist churches at the time he organized the church at Robert's Grove, which bears his name. He was a member of Shady Grove, and the minutes of Shady Grove Church of October 1896 state that he and his wife along with 15 other Shady Grove members moved their memberships to the new church at Robert's Grove. Elder Jackson donated the land on which the church building was constructed. The building was apparently built shortly after the organization as the church minutes of May 1897 contain a motion to "sell remnants of building material left from building the church."

In the first year, a Sunday school was organized and reported to the Cape Fear Conference in the fall of 1897 as having 87 members. Also in June of 1897, a prayer meeting to be held at 7:00 pm each Saturday was organized. In May 1905, a Woman's Missionary Society was organized. Growth of the church was steady but not spectacular as membership by 1917 was about 90. In spite of difficult times in the aftermath of WW I, an economic depression and another world war, church membership grew to 162 and the Sunday school grew to 110 by 1946.

Growth necessitated physical expansion, thus four Sunday school rooms were added to the rear sides of the church in 1944. This called for renovations and modifications of the sanctuary. By 1946, the first mentioned homecoming was held, additional deacons had been elected, a church budget had been adopted, and services were changed from Sunday night to Saturday afternoon. Preaching service, however, was still held only once a month although Sunday school met every Sunday. The long term pastorate of Rev. Minot Godwin, who lived in the area was a solidifying force



during these maturing years. His wife was an able leader; youth and women's activities received a boost from her guidance.

During the period of 1947-1965, the church grew and expanded physically for better spiritual service. Membership grew to approximately 195 by 1965. Records indicate that there was much growth in the physical plant and in programs of the church. In 1958, the sanctuary was remodeled: a vestibule, porch and two overflow rooms were added to the front of the church. New pews, altar furniture, and stained glass windows were donated and installed. A parsonage was completed in 1962 and half-time pastorate was changed to full-time. The Reverend David Charles Hansley was the first full-time pastor. An educational unit with additional classrooms, nursery, restrooms, kitchen, fellowship hall, office/library, and choir room was completed in 1964.

By 1976 membership had reached 263, but regular attendance only averaged 100-125. However, many youth activities and church programs began. A Men's Fellowship was organized in 1982. Between 1964 and 2000, renovation and improvements in the physical plant were completed. However, the largest expansion of the church was completed in 2004 when an entirely new educational wing was added. This major addition of over 10,000 square feet doubled the church size and included new classrooms, nurseries, restrooms, a library, offices, parlor, a large meeting room, new kitchen and a new fellowship hall. Including furnishings and grounds improvements, this expansion represented over a million dollar expenditure which was paid for three months after its completion. Fred Baker has been pastor since 1991.



## **Shady Grove Free Will Baptist Church**

7605 Newton Grove Highway  
Dunn, NC 28334

Shady Grove is one of the original eight churches belonging to the Cape Fear Conference when it was organized in 1855 and is the only one of the eight that remains a member of the original Cape Fear Conference today. Although there are no known records of the founding of the church and its earliest years, tradition has it that the church was organized in 1850, and at the organization of the Cape Fear Conference on November 1, 1855, Shady Grove reported a membership of 80. It was represented in that assembly by D. B. Dawson, John A. Butler, and James Warren. Its first pastor is believed to be Elder William Byrd.

The first structure, called the meetinghouse, was a small log structure located across the road from the present church. In 1865 a second building was constructed across the road from the log structure on the site of the present building. Twenty nine years later, that building was purchased by one of the neighboring farmers and became a part of his stables. The first section of the present building was erected in 1894 and now serves as the sanctuary with numerous renovations and expansions over the years. As the membership grew, it was necessary over the years to expand the physical facilities. In 1925, with a church membership of 350, an annex for Sunday school rooms was added. Later in 1949, five additional Sunday school rooms were constructed in the upper portion of the annex and an activity building was constructed on the grounds. In 1959, following a fire that damaged the auditorium and some classrooms, four more classrooms were built as a part of the covered walkway from the main church to the activity building. The fire necessitated a complete renovation of the church proper, and many modern conveniences were added as a result.

Although available records prove that a Sunday school began as early as 1897, it is believed that a Sunday school was probably meeting prior to that date. At the end of the first year of the Sunday school work, membership in the school numbered 140. A





Woman's Auxiliary was organized around 1919 and is still an active part of the work of the church. With time, various youth organizations emerged.

Shady Grove has been the "mother church" to the organization of at least six other churches: Robert's Grove, Lee's Chapel, Oak Grove, St. Paul, Wooten's Chapel, and Palmer Memorial. It was also at Shady Grove that the Cape Fear Conference met in a special session in January of 1912 to make a decision about the Pentecostal controversy that was splitting the Conference. Many of the churches originally in the Conference left and organized another conference which operated under the new doctrine. Shady Grove remained true to the original Cape Fear Conference, however.

Today Shady Grove is still an active member of the Cape Fear Conference and is involved in the many ministries of the Convention of Original Free Will Baptists. Its current pastor is the Rev. Stephen Prescott.



## **Smyrna Original Free Will Baptist Church**

11415 NC 96 Hwy. South  
Benson, NC 27504

The Church began when a group of neighbors, friends, and family started meeting in the home the home of J. Paul and Lettie Lee under the leadership of Rev. Herman Wooten, brother-in-law of Mr. Lee. As the idea of starting a church materialized, Mrs. Lee offered the name "Smyrna" as the name of the church and it was accepted. Work began toward formal organization of the church and the construction of a building. On August 20, 1950, with a total of twenty-three persons present, the first officers were elected, and a committee was named to begin work toward a church building. Mr. Lennie A. Tart donated an acre of land, and Mr. and Mrs. J. H. Smith, although not members of Smyrna, donated the timber for the original portion of the church. The first service held in the new building was on May 6, 1951, with Rev. Wooten preaching. Much of the furniture and equipment was donated, both by members and other churches (Oak Grove, Friendship, and Shady Grove).

On September 1, 1951, the first quarterly meeting of the church was held. In the spring of 1952, the Woman's Auxiliary was organized under the leadership of Mrs. Minot Godwin. Mrs. Ethel Tart was the first president, and eventually, the auxiliary was named for her. In October of 1952, Sunday school classes were organized and officers and teachers were elected. This was under the direction of Mr. A. F. Balance, a member of Shady Grove Church. On March 28, 1953, Smyrna hosted its first Union Meeting of the Cape Fear Conference, and in the fall, Rev. W. A. Martin began his 34-yr. tenure as pastor. The first Harvest Day was held in 1955, as was the first wedding and the first vacation Bible School under the direction of Ray G. Smith.

As membership grew, the need for additional Sunday school rooms was apparent and by March 1961, seven classrooms were added to the rear of the original church building. The first Homecoming was held in May 1964. Stained glass windows were added in the sanctuary in 1968, and in 1974, restrooms were installed in the Sunday school classroom area. In 1975 a church bus was purchased for the travel needs of the



youth and other groups. A fellowship hall was built and occupied around 1982. During the next ten years, the pulpit area was remodeled, a shelter at the end of the fellowship hall was built, a vestibule was added, a steeple was donated by Earl and Ethel Tart, a baptistery was installed, and other improvements and equipment were made or added to the church. During the period from 1995 to the present, additional land has been purchased around the church, the sanctuary expanded, the cemetery expansion completed, a church van purchased, and landscape/walkways/parking projects completed. However, the biggest growth has not been physical, but in denominational involvement and in the spiritual outreach of church programs, especially those of the youth.

Pastors serving the church since its founding are as follows: Herman Wooten (1950-1951); Minot Godwin (1951-1953); W. A. Martin (1953-1987); T. C. Farmer (1988-1990); Charles Petit (1990-1994); Ronnie Hayes (1995-2002); Jonathan Pearce (2002-2004); and Richard Whitman (2004-present).



## **St. Mary's Grove Free Will Baptist Church**

7987 Raleigh Road  
Benson, NC 27504

The exact date of the organization of St. Mary's Grove is not known, as the church has no extant minutes prior to 1926. However, the church was listed in the statistical chart of the Cape Fear Conference minutes of October 1866 with 22 members and was represented by Elder Parrott Creech (the first pastor). The minutes of the Conference for 1862-65 are not recorded in the original manuscript minute book that is housed in the FWB Historical Collection at Mount Olive College. Speculation is that if the Conference met during the Civil War, records were either not kept or were never recorded in the manuscript book. Whatever the situation, the minutes do not record a motion to admit the "new church at St. Mary's Grove" as is the procedure used in previous and later minutes of the Conference. Since this is the case, it is probably safe to say that the church was admitted or joined the Conference the year before (1865) as the membership of 22 in 1866 was small for a church that had it been established more than a year prior.

Earlier interviews with Mrs. Laura Creech Coats, who died at age 97 in 1965, gave information that aids in the writing of the early history of the church. Mrs. Coats was the daughter of Elder Parrott Creech who she said was the founder and first pastor of the church. She said that in the latter part of the 1880's, the one-room church building being used became too small because members of the Rehobeth [Primitive Baptist Church] would worship with St. Mary's Grove when they did not have services; she also said that St. Mary's Grove members also visited Rehobeth services as well. She said the original building was moved to one side for another larger structure (also one room) to be built on the site. This building served until 1911 or 1912 when it burned. Again a new structure was built in its place by Ruffin Coats and other members of the congregation. Many years later, Tom D. Coats and Bill Langdon furnished materials, and wings were built on both sides of the one-room frame sanctuary. The building served the congregation until 1961/62 when a new structure was built. The old building was sold.





In 1955, a parsonage was built and occupied, while a fellowship/activity wing added to the rear of the church was completed in 1974.

Early pastors in addition to Elder Creech were Elders Dock Johnson, Ruffin Coats, and Herman Wooten.



## **St. Paul Free Will Baptist Church**

14061 Hobbton Highway  
Newton Grove, NC 28366

Following a series of meetings under a brush arbor near Bluff School, located approximately one-quarter mile from its present location, St. Paul Free Will Baptist Church was founded sometime in mid-1897 by Rev. R. C. Jackson and a faithful group of some twenty-nine believers. The church requested and received admission into the Cape Fear Conference in November 1897. In addition to the early services held by The Reverend Jackson, tradition says that a revival was also held at the arbor by evangelist Blackman Crumpler (A. B. Crumpler). Also in the fall of 1897, a one room church building was completed on an acre of land near Bluff School donated by Mr. and Mrs. H. C. Giddens. The recorded deed lists church trustees as F. M. Dameron, Blake Warren, J. M. Britt, and B. J. Daughtry; other records indicate these four were also the first deacons and that Mr. Dameron was the first clerk.

As the church grew and as early as 1899, a Sunday school was organized with E. S. W. Dameron as the first superintendent followed by M.A. Warwick, who served approximately forty-five years until his death in 1947. Mr. Warwick was also a minister and preached in various FWB churches in the surrounding area. In this growing period, membership reached 92 by 1900, and a Ladies' Home Missionary Society was organized in 1925. However, many details of this early growth cannot be documented by record as a fire at the home of the church clerk in 1931 destroyed early church records. In addition to Rev. Jackson who served in 1897 and 1899, other known early pastors included C. A. Jackson (1898), W. R. Allen (1900), J. G. Hill (1901), Frank Casey (1902), W. R. Coats (1903 and 1906), C. M. Jackson (1904), E. J. McKay (1905), and D. R. Ennis (1907). Including the present pastor, Rev. Braxton Carter, a total of thirty-seven ministers have served the church since its founding with Rev. C. Felton Godwin serving the longest term (1970-1986) to date.

On April 1, 1937, Mr. and Mrs. J. H. Britt donated one and one-tenth acres of land as a new site for the church on U.S. Highway 701 (near Monk's Crossroads). The church



building was actually rolled on logs from the Bluff School site to its present location. During the pastorate of Rev. W. A. Hales, two Sunday school rooms and additional space were added to the back of the church in 1939. Other major building and remodeling programs took place in 1952/53, 1960, 1962, 1966, 1970, and 1975-77 during which time interior renovations were made and stained glass windows, a steeple, additional restrooms and a vestibule, porch, parking area, baptistery and a fellowship hall were added to meet the needs of a growing church program. Now, St. Paul continues to be a blessed body of congregants in the heart of Sampson County.



## **\*\* Steven's Chapel Free Will Baptist Church**

7856 Elevation Road  
Benson, NC 27504

According to the minutes of the Cape Fear Conference of October 31-Nov. 1, 1946, the following report was presented: "We, your Credentials Committee, beg to report that we have received a petition from Steven's Chapel Church, recently organized by Elder G. S. Stevens. We are glad to approve and hereby recommend the admittance of said church as a member of the Cape Fear Original Free Will Baptist Conference with all its rights and privileges." The minutes further state that "Report was adopted and the church was admitted to membership with the hand of fellowship and welcome extended to Brothers W. A. Martin and W. S. Stevens, delegates." The statistical table lists the church as having 13 members. Esther Dayringer was listed as clerk and G. S. Stevens as pastor. There was no report of a Sunday school in operation.

Today the church is thriving under the leadership of Rev. Richard McKeel and the membership is approximately 75.

\*\* The editorial committee preparing this history did not have access to any written history of the church nor did the church furnish any information when contacted. Therefore, this brief account was prepared from basic information found in the Cape Fear Conference minutes.





## **Tee's Chapel Free Will Baptist Church**

6434 Brogden Road  
Smithfield, NC 27577

The original Tee's Chapel Church was in Grabtown (about one mile from its present location) and was named Sandy Church because of the windswept sandy land of the vicinity. Later, the name was changed to T's Chapel deriving that name from T. T. Oliver who was associated with the antebellum plantation on which the first church was organized and built in 1887 or 1888. About 1909, R. L. and Omega A. Ray gave land for a new church (a one-room building) constructed on the present site in a then piney woods area. Based on oral tradition, some of the early founders of the original church were Millard Woodall, Elder Daniel Davis, Henry and Dora Royall, Jim Pilkington and George R. Tyner.

Records of the church are not available prior to 1900, but Robert Strickland was the pastor in 1900. Records note that the new church had deacons, trustees, a deaconess, ruling elders and elders. Records do indicate that in 1912 the ruling elders voted to remain with the original Cape Fear Conference when the Conference split over the issue of Pentecostalism.

As church membership and programs grew, it was necessary to expand the facilities and in 1948 Sunday school rooms were added to each side of the church. Subsequent growth saw the realization of a new church, begun in December 1956 and occupied in December 1958. However, the basement of the new facility, which consisted of ten classrooms, offices, restrooms and a ladies lounge, was not completed until four years later so the main sanctuary initially served dual purposes. Also in 1958, land for a cemetery located behind the church was donated.

After the loan was repaid for the new church in 1962, the membership voted to borrow money to brick veneer the new building, add a steeple and remodel the old church into a fellowship hall. This work was completed in November 1964 as well as the addition of a picnic shelter on the grounds.



Pastoral leadership during the building programs of the 50's and 60's was by Boyd Shook, Billy Yawn, Albert Coats, and C. M. Coats with supply work by W. H. Lancaster. In the 1970's, and early 1980's, updates and remodeling was done to the existing facilities, and a parsonage was dedicated in 1976.

In December 1986, after plans to move the fellowship hall so it would align with the newer church building was thwarted because of structural problems, the church voted to tear the old facility down and replace it with a new structure which was completed and dedicated in August of 1987. And again, a church on the move, voted to build a new church facility, including a sanctuary and to tear down the existing two-story church upon completion of the new facility. Following a ground breaking in June 2004, the new facility was occupied June 30, 2005 and dedicated on November 6, 2005.

Tee's Chapel has always been noted for its music program and choirs. Many awards from the Benson Singing Convention have been won by these choirs and other groups from the church. Robert Tyner, Walter Royall, Johnny Woodall and Durwood Woodall are noted choir directors. During the years, many ministers have been called into the ministry, licensed and ordained as a result of the work of the church and its pastoral leadership. At least five have been called during the leadership of the current pastor, Dennis Pollock, who has been at Tee's Chapel since March of 1991.



## **\*\* West Clinton Free Will Baptist Church**

Pierce Street  
Clinton, NC 28329

The following action is recorded in the Cape Fear Conference meeting on October 31, 1940: "Petitionary letter is received from West Clinton Free Will Baptist Church, recently organized by Elder Ranton H. Jackson, asking admittance into this association, with eleven members and a church building about completed. On motion the church be received and its delegates, Mrs. R. L. Tew and J. L. Tew, be duly seated and the hand of welcome extended them by the Moderator." Thus we would assume that the church was organized sometime earlier that year. The statistical table of the Conference minutes states that R. H. Jackson was pastor, R. M. McDaniel was Sunday school superintendent, Mrs. R. L. Tew was Sunday school secretary, and Mrs. F. S. [may be F.A. or A.F.] Crumpler was church clerk. There were 113 members on roll in the Sunday school with average attendance of 46. The Ladies' Aid Society had 8 members. In 1941, the church reported a membership of 21.

\*\* The editorial committee preparing this history did not have access to any written history of the church nor did the church furnish any information when contacted. Therefore, this brief account was prepared from basic information found in the Cape Fear Conference minutes.



## **Wooten's Chapel Free Will Baptist Church**

9825 Sauls Road  
Raleigh, NC 27603

The November 1, 1945, session of the Cape Fear Conference records show that a petitionary letter from Wooten's Chapel, recently organized by the Elder Hermon Wooten, was received and admittance to the Conference was granted. It is known that the work which resulted in the organization of the church had begun at least a year earlier. Elder Wooten had helped organize a group of people as a mission in July 1944 in the yard of the Hubert Mangum family on Gully Mill Road (now known as Sauls Road) about seven miles south of Garner, NC. Approximately forty five adults and children assembled for the first meeting. A brush arbor was built across the road from the Mangum home soon after the first meeting, and in the fall, a crude tabernacle was constructed and served as the worship center until a better facility was available.

The first business meeting of the newly organized church was held April 1, 1945, and on the same date, a baptismal service was held at Kirby Jordan's pond. Twelve people were baptized and four joined the church by transfer of membership. On October 6, 1945, Mr. Hoke Lassiter deeded to trustees Roy Lassiter and J. Carson Honeycutt an acre of land for the purpose of building a church. The land was located one mile south on the same road as the original meeting place and tabernacle. After securing a loan from the FWB Church Finance Association, a permanent building was begun. The structure consisted of a sanctuary and two Sunday school rooms. The congregation moved into the new facility the latter part of 1945.

In 1953 the Ladies' Auxiliary was organized, and as the church membership had grown, an addition was made to the back of the church in 1963/64 consisting of a basement fellowship hall and classroom with four classrooms and restrooms on the upper level. Reverend J. B. Caton became pastor in 1970 and became the first full-time pastor in 1972. He remained until May 1983. Under his leadership, many improvements were made. A parsonage was built in 1975 on land donated by Mrs. Siddie Sauls. A steeple was added in 1982. As the church grew, more space was needed, and again, the Lassiter





family donated land and a new fellowship hall was completed in 1998. More recently, renovations to the choir section of the sanctuary were made and a baptistery was installed in the fellowship building. The current pastor is Rev. Gene Britt.



## **Yelverton Grove Free Will Baptist Church**

1094 Yelverton Grove Road  
Smithfield, NC 27577

According to the Cape Fear Conference minutes of Nov. 1898, p. 5, a petitionary letter was submitted and the new church at Yelverton Grove, Johnston County, NC, organized by Elders C. A. Jackson and J. A. Hodges, was admitted to the Conference. The report showed ten members, and Joseph Wilson was the clerk. On January 23, 1899, Mr. and Mrs. B. B. Yelverton deeded Yelverton Grove church property to the Cape Fear Conference. The original church was located east of Smithfield, NC, and was a small wooden structure. A Rev. Wallace and Rev. H. R. Faircloth served the church between 1899 and 1928. There have been nineteen known pastors since the beginning of the church. Ruling elders and deacons are appointed for life, and there have been a total of fourteen deacons. Records of the first years of the church are not extant. Original records date only from 1928.

The original church building was sold for \$100.00 in 1950, moved to Selma, and converted into a house. Construction on a new building, started in late 1943, was completed about 1950. Sunday school rooms were added later at two different times, the later being in 1962. A fellowship hall was completed in early 1975, and many other improvements have been made, all done debt free at completion. A Woman's Auxiliary was organized in 1951. The first Bible school was begun in the early 1950's. The first mid-week prayer meeting services began in 1965. Full-time Sunday services were begun around 1974 under the pastorate of Rev. C. M. Coats who served for seven years. He was followed by Rev. Luby Tyner who served from 1981-1991. He was followed by Rev. Chris Markuson who served for seven years until his untimely death in 1998. The Rev. Joe Balance was called to pastor in 1999 and continues to serve the church today.

Many improvements to the physical facilities of the church have been made since 2000, among them the complete renovation of the church sanctuary with new pews and light fixtures in 2008. The church supports all denominational enterprises as well as its own local benevolent causes. Currently, church membership numbers approximately 128



with about 50 percent being active. During its history, at least eight young men have been called and licensed to preach from the church, further evidence that the Gospel has always been central to the history of Yelverton Grove.





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